Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

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CONFESSIONS OF A GHOST HUNTER

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Elliot

By

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

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CONFESSIONS OF A GHOST HUNTER

CHAPTER I

WHY I TOOK TO GHOST HUNTING

I am often asked why the subject of ghosts and everything else that appertains to what is vulgarly termed the supernatural interests me so absorbingly. My reply is that I believe I am interested because many, if not all, of my forebears were so, and also because of certain ghostly happenings connected with the death of my father. Dealing, in due course, with both these reasons for the interest I take in ghosts and all that the term implies, I will in this chapter briefly allude to the various channels through which the psychic faculty has been handed down to me, and, to begin with, draw particular attention to the source from which, as far as is known, it was derived. Far back, in the dim and shadowy days of long ago, Naighiallach, better known as Niall of the Nine Hostages, from whom my branch of the O'Donnells claim, and can prove, direct descent, appears to have been in close touch with the Unknown, and between his descendants, individually, and the Unknown there seems to have existed in varying degree a mutual attraction ever since. Indeed, all kinds of hauntings and super-

natural phenomena have been associated with my progenitors, and in the same measure, perhaps, that they drew and fascinated the Unknown, the Unknown drew and fascinated them. It is, then, small wonder, that I, in like manner, attract and am attracted by the Unknown. If one inherits a taste, say, for painting, or drawing, or gardening, surely one inherits other tastes as well, and the ability to learn and assimilate the secrets of the Unknown, either by sitting up all night in some haunted house (in order to see and get into communication with what is popularly styled a ghost), or by the use of some other method, is but a taste, and although, perhaps, a queer taste, it is, I venture to assert, none the less eligible for transmission on that account. After all, we humans, mentally as well as physically, are but reproductions of those who have gone before us; in other words, we merely inherit and reproduce the minds and bodies, with all their respective mental and physical idiosyncrasies, of our forebears. Hence, I repeat, no matter whether I choose to be, or not, I am, in popular phraseology, a psychic, simply because my people were psychics before me.

To return to the first known source of my psychic heritage, I would point out that tradition has woven round Niall of the Nine Hostages many strange romances, accounts of which are contained in the Book of Leinster [1] and in the Book of Ballymote. [2] He possessed few, if any, of the almost saintlike attributes of Arthur, Britain's legendary King; he was simply a predatory chieftain; but like Arthur he is constantly associated with the magic and myster-

[1] Fol. 33, col. 2, 1, 10. [2] Fol. 265, cols. a and b.

ious, with fairies, hauntings and necromancers, and both he and Arthur, undoubtedly, were psychics.

Conall Gulban, Niall's son, appears to have been of a somewhat more creditable disposition than his father, but he, too, no less than and, perhaps even more conspicuously than Niall, came within the shadow of the Unknown. I will here outline one of the mystic stories, relating to him.[1]

His father, being frequently absent from home on some plundering expedition, Conall was placed entirely under the charge of his tutor, a Druidical priest, who took a peculiar interest in him. When Conall, some years later, had grown a tall, fine lad, this priest took him, one day, to a hill, and pointing to a big stone said, "Raise that my son." Conall raised the stone, but he did so with great difficulty, whereupon the priest bade his pupil remain with him another twelve months. At the end of this period he once again conducted Conall to the hill, and pointing to a sapling, said, "I will now test both your strength and your speed. Pick up that young tree and hit me on the back with it, before I get to the bottom of the hill." He commenced running as he spoke, and Conall, uprooting the sapling with ease, set off immediately in pursuit. Fast though the Druid ran, for he was powerfully built and still in the prime of life, Conall ran faster, and catching him up belaboured him so heartily that he soon cried for mercy. "You will do now," the priest said finally, rubbing his still aching shoulders. "You are fit and strong and well able to hold your own in the world. Go now, and try your luck at the Court of the King of Leinster." So Conall Gulban set off,

[1] *Vide* "Bardic Stories," by Patrick Kennedy.

and arriving at Naas, in the vicinity of the royal palace, straightway fell in love with the king's daughter, Dichalla, one of the most beautiful girls in Erin. Happily, Dichalla reciprocated Conall's affection, but before a marriage could be arranged a war broke out between Italy and Greece, and Niall of the Nine Hostages and the King of Leinster, being invited to participate in it, went to Italy, accompanied by numerous knights and soldiers. They left Conall in Leinster to protect Dichalla against the Black Giant of Lochlann, one of her rejected suitors, who was said to be a wizard as well as immeasurably strong, and who, it was anticipated, would make an attempt, in the absence of her father, to carry off Dichalla by force. And sure enough, no sooner had the two kings sailed, than the Black Giant laid siege to the palace, and after having rendered Conall and his followers helpless by means of some magical spell, carried off Dichalla in triumph. Dichalla, however, had succeeded in leaving a written message for Conall, and Conall, on recovering his faculties, at once started off to her rescue.

Arriving outside the Black Giant's castle, he first of all fought and vanquished the Black Giant's son. Then he overthrew a youth who aspired to the hand of Cumra, the Black Giant's daughter, and finally, to his great joy, he overcame the Black Giant himself.

Thus, he not only freed Dichalla, but by his bravery he so won the hearts of his three conquered foes (who attributed his remarkable powers to supernatural agency) that they became his firm friends and allies, the Black Giant, in addition, repenting of his evil ways, and becoming once again a respect-

able member of society. But that was not all. The entente, thus miraculously brought about, proved of the greatest service to Niall. Affairs in the East had turned out most disastrously for him, and had not the Black Giant, through his knowledge of the Black Art, counteracted the evil designs of a notorious witch employed by the enemy, the Irish, in all probability, would have been annihilated. As it was, however, the war ended in a victory for them and their allies, and soon after the return of Niall and his army to Ireland, Conall and Dichalla were married amid the greatest rejoicing.

This story is a fair sample of the many relating to Conall Gulban, sung by the Bards of old, and I have quoted it merely to illustrate the way in which the first known members of my family were associated with the supernatural.

Another Bardic story tells of the groaning stone, a haunting that was associated with the O'Donnells of Donegal for many centuries.

The haunting was brought about in the following manner. A chief of the Cinel Conaill (Conall), whilst on a visit to the palace of the Ard Righ at Teamur, with his wife, noticed that the son of the Ard Righ was paying her a good deal of attention, and that the two sought each other's company on every possible occasion. This discovery naturally angered him, and one day, surprising the pair engaged in passionate love-making, he drew his sword and slew the seducer. Seized immediately afterwards by some of the Ard Righ's followers, the Chief of the Cinel Conaill would have been slain by them, had not the king intervened, and the latter, instead of condemning his unhappy guest to death,

ordered him to carry the body of his victim over hill and dale till he could find a natural tomb in which to bury it. Thus the Chief of the Cinel Conaill went forth from the palace of the Ard Righ, and it was not until he had carried his grisly burden many miles and felt that he could go no further that he chanced to come upon a natural tomb suitable in every respect for the burial. It was a huge stone, standing on a lonely hillock to the north-east of Tirconaill (Tirconnell) in Donegal, and the Chief of the Cinel Conaill, aided now, it would seem, by the super-physical, for he could have had little strength left of his own, at last succeeded in raising the stone and burying the body of his victim in a hollow underneath it. He then sank to the ground and died of exhaustion, and soon afterwards the hauntings began. Passers by the stone declared they could hear groans proceeding from it, and from the fact that the Cinel Conaill built a fortress round it, which they named the Fort of the Groans, one may, I think, conclude that its reputation for being haunted was not altogether unmerited.

Even more remarkable, perhaps, is the story of the Cathach of St. Columba. Though it may not be generally known, St. Columba, or Colum-Cille, belonged to the Cinel Conaill, and was a descendant of Conall Gulban, the founder of the House of the O'Donnells of the North. While on a visit to St. Finnan of Ulster, St. Columba borrowed the Book of Psalms from his host and made a copy of it. This copy, carefully preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, is certainly one of the most uniquely interesting and extraordinary relics in the world; for not only is it in the handwriting of the Saint

himself, but it long served as the mascot of the Cinel Conaill, being generally believed to possess supernatural powers. Whenever the clan went to battle, the MSS., enclosed in a casket and termed the Cathach, accompanied them, and, provided it was carried round the camp immediately prior to the fight, victory was assured. Indeed, so widespread was the reputation it had won that an enemy thought twice before giving battle to the O'Donnells, when it was known that the Clan had their mascot, the Cathach, with them. Even from these few instances it will be seen that I do not exaggerate when I affirm that the superphysical has continuously played a prominent part in the history of my forefathers; but to illustrate its association with them still further, I need only mention two prophecies once believed in, probably, without exception, by the whole of the Irish people, high and low, rich and poor. The prophecies are (1) that Ireland will never be entirely freed from the yoke of the foreigner till one Hugh shall succeed another Hugh immediately and lawfully as the O'Donnell [1]; and (2) that the days of Irish freedom shall come when an O'Donnell with a red spot or spots on his chest shall lead an army against the national foe. Needless to say, these prophecies have not been fulfilled, although on one or two occasions [2] in the past the

[1] The title was purely an elective one, and did not always descend from father to eldest son. Niall Garv, for instance, was elected The O'Donnell on the death of his father, Toirdhealbhach, in the place of his elder brother, Shane Luirg, and "Red Hugh" was descended from Niall Garv. The ceremony of electing "The O'Donnell" was performed with much pomp at the rock of Kilmacrennan.

[2] When, for instance, "Red Hugh" was elected "The O'Donnell," on the death of his father, Hugh; and when, not quite a hundred years later, Hugh Balldearg O'Donnell, son of John O'Donnell, an

expectation that they were about to be fulfilled was not without some reason entertained in many quarters.

The branch of the O'Donnell family to which I belong left its old home at Tirconnell about the end of the fifteenth century, and migrating south, settled in Limerick, and Clare, making O'Donnell Castle their headquarters at first, and later, Trough.

The Banshee, to which I shall devote a chapter later (it is very inaccurately described by various writers), has haunted the O'Donnells for centuries (it probably haunted the first O'Donnell) ; and as if that in itself did not provide sufficient ghostliness to satisfy the most ghost-loving member of our family, my seventeenth-century ancestor, Edmund O'Donnell through his marriage with Bridget O'Rourk, of the ancient and much haunted House of Brefny, introduced other ghosts, thus considerably strengthening our ties with the Unknown, and rendering us more than ever liable to ghostly experiences.

To narrate all the strange stories connected with this branch of the O'Rourks in the limited amount of space that I have at my disposal here would, of course, be an impossibility. I will, therefore, refer to one of these stories only, the story relating to what was at one time known as theWeeping Tomb at Killmallock Abbey.[1]

Some six centuries ago a bitter feud raged in the south of Ireland between the O'Rourks of Brefny

officer in the Spanish service, popularly supposed to have a red mark or marks on his chest, tried to offer opposition to the English forces in Ireland.

[1] Referred to in " The Romance of the Aristocracy," by Sir Bernard Burke.

and Maurice Fitzgerald, commonly called "The White Knight." Fitzgerald, whose headquarters were at Mitchellstown, and who had sworn that he would never rest till he had utterly exterminated his still powerful foes, was one day stamping up and down the courtyard of his castle, impatiently awaiting the saddling of his steed, when he espied a man, evidently the bearer of some tidings, talking excitedly to a group of his fellow-servants. The White Knight quickly approached this group, and upon his demanding to be told instantly of what happened, the bearer of the news, taken unawares, informed him, in halting language and quaking with fright, that a member of the detested House of O'Rourk, a young lady called Elgiva, but better known as "The Flower of Brefny," on account of her beauty, was concealed on his territory, having been for some time an inmate of the Convent or Abbey, as it was called, of Killmallock.

"You lie, varlet!" Fitzgerald thundered. "That my enemy should be residing at Killmallock, almost within sight of my stronghold, is impossible. But I will soon know." And flinging himself into the saddle, for his steed stood awaiting him, the enraged knight, followed by a body of troopers armed to the teeth, whose duty it was to be at hand, prepared for any emergency, set off, riding like the wind, to the old Abbey.

The news proved correct. The fair Elgiva was there, in the Abbey of Killmallock, and the Abbess, afraid to disobey the stern command of the savage Fitzgerald, but at the same time protesting and entreating, gave her up.

Now, although his loathing of the O'Rourks

blinded Fitzgerald to the charms of Elgiva and he only saw in her one of his detested enemy's brood, yet he treated her with tolerable courtesy. On arriving with her at Mitchellstown Castle, he himself chose quarters for her, that, although situated, it is true, in the most impregnable part of his stronghold, had a pleasant outlook and were little frequented, and this one cannot help thinking, he did, in order that she might at least enjoy some privacy and take some pleasure in her surroundings.

One day, however, by a strange chance, Fitzgerald's son, Edmund, a handsome and amiable youth, and, in all probability, the only person in the world for whom the White Knight really entertained any affection, when wandering round the castle saw Elgiva looking out of her window, and although of a nature, perhaps, the reverse of amorous, he promptly fell in love with her.

Clandestine meetings followed, for Elgiva, as well as Edmund, had fallen in love at first sight, and shortly afterwards the two eloped, making direct for the Abbey at Killmallock, where they would have been married, had not the most tragic of all tragic fates overtaken them. Their flight being quickly discovered, Maurice Fitzgerald, guessing their intention only too well, pursued them in hot haste, and arriving at the Abbey, whilst the marriage service was in progress, stabbed Elgiva to death, and then sent his son, who had been, first of all, seized and bound, under armed escort, into banishment. Even then, apparently, he was not satisfied, and in order to wreak still further vengeance, he gave orders that Edmund's trusted servant, who had aided in the elopement, should be thrust

into a hole between two rocks and left there to starve.[1]

However, retribution quickly overtook the cruel murderer. To slay an enemy who offered no resistance was deemed bad enough, but when that enemy happened to be an innocent maiden, and, moreover, the scion of a house that by reason of its many legends and traditions was believed by the country folk everywhere to be under the benign influence of the Unknown, the deed was regarded in a far more serious light; and therefore it was small wonder that henceforth everything went wrong with the White Knight. His enemies, roused to fresh indignation at this, his latest and most horrible enormity, and encouraged, perhaps, by the general outcry against him, attacked him with renewed vigour, and though they were ultimately beaten, they succeeded in harassing their adversary and reduced his resources to such an extent that he became but a shadow of his former self, and died, shorn of all his former power and almost regal splendour, a hardened and unrepentent sinner to the last. And with his death, perhaps, the most interesting part of the story, namely the superphysical, begins. Though his body was buried in a most costly tomb in the old Abbey of Killmallock, Maurice Fitzgerald was not at rest there. Every day, no matter how warm and dry the weather, spots of moisture might be seen on certain of the tombstones within the sacred precincts of the Abbey, and those who lived in the district and saw

[1] A skeleton, generally believed to be that of this poor wretch, was found in the exact situation described by tradition, when the Earl of Kingston was having the foundations of a new castle laid during the early part of the last century.

them were unanimously of the opinion that they were tears—tears that the dead knight was condemned to shed in atonement for the murder of the "Flower of Brefny." According to certain authorities, the phenomena continued right up to about the beginning of the last century, and ceased only when the tomb of the White Knight was in part demolished and removed; and it is, I believe, generally agreed that the said spots of moisture on the tombstones in Killmallock Abbey were never satisfactorily explained, saving on the basis of the supernatural.

CHAPTER II

HEREDITY AND THE PSYCHIC FACULTY

Having alluded but briefly to the Banshee in the preceding chapter, I will now deal with it more fully, and expatiate first of all on the famous Banshee of the O'Briens of Thomond, which ever since the sixteenth century, when Mary O'Brien, daughter of Donat O'Brien, married Hugh O'Donnell, has been more or less attached to our family. The O'Briens of Thomond originally, I believe, came of the same stock as the O'Donnells of the North (it being claimed that they were the descendants of a progenitor of Niall of the Nine Hostages), and should this be a fact yet another reason for the haunting of the O'Donnells by the O'Brien Banshee would, of course, be established.

Of the O'Brien Banshee, the Banshee to which I would here draw particular attention, Lady Fanshawe, wife of the Right Honourable Sir Richard Fanshawe, Bart.,[1] whose Memoirs, reprinted from the original MSS., were published in 1907, gives a very graphic description. Staying with Lady Honora O'Brien, youngest daughter of the Earl of Thomond, she was awakened one night by a voice. She sat up in bed and saw a strange face looking in at her through the casement. She describes it as

[1] 1600–1672.

having red hair and a ghastly complexion, and says that after thrice repeating the word "Ahone" it vanished, with a sigh "more like wind than breath." The following morning, after Lady Fanshawe had narrated her experience to Lady Honora, the latter stated that one of her cousins, who was an inmate of the house, had died in the night, and that the apparition Lady Fanshawe had seen was undoubtedly the Banshee, the O'Brien of Thomond's family ghost. Lady Honora also told her guest that, according to tradition, an O'Brien had murdered a woman whom he had seduced and buried her in the garden, almost exactly underneath the window of the room in which Lady Fanshawe had slept, and that she, Lady Honora, believed that the Banshee, which had persistently haunted the O'Briens of Thomond ever since the murder, was actually the spirit of this poor murdered woman. Somewhat inconsistently, at least so I hope, for the honour it confers would appear to be of a rather doubtful nature, this particular Banshee, as I have already stated, whilst still haunting the O'Briens, to whom it was primarily attached, and whom, for that reason, it will never cease to haunt, has been known, occasionally, to have haunted us. However, for the consolation of both families, I would remark that in forming her opinion as to the origin of the O'Brien Banshee, Lady Honora seems to have regarded tradition as synonymous with fact, a circumstance that may have led her entirely astray.

But to proceed. The actual O'Donnell Banshee has been touched upon by many writers. The authoress of "John Halifax, Gentleman,"[1] refers to

[1] *Vide* "Is it True?" published 1872.

it in some detail in the story of the Doona Saan of White-Goat Glen; but her description of it reads more like fairy fiction than a realistic account, and does not in the least degree tally with the description of it given by members of my family who have actually seen it. Its origin, as one may easily conceive from its appearance, which suggests that it dates back to a prehistoric period, is unknown. For my own part, and I speak from actual experience, I am inclined to favour the theory that Banshees, the majority at least, are a species of what is commonly termed elemental, that is to say they belong to a class or order of spirits, which, like the Irish leprechaun, pookah and other fairies, have never inhabited material bodies. They only haunt families that have a genuine strain of ancient Irish blood in them, but to these they are very loyal; that is to say, they never forsake the families they have once haunted, no matter how poor the latter may be, or to what part of the world they may have migrated. Indeed, since there are so few of the really genuine old Irish families left in Ireland to-day, the Banshee would seem to be heard and seen more often abroad, in Spain, Austria and America, for example, than in Ireland itself.

It is a common error to speak of phantom coaches, birds and similar phenomena as Banshees, for Banshees are, of necessity, invariably in the guise of a woman, the term Bean Sidhe, of which Banshee is a contraction, meaning "the woman of the barrow," or "Woman of Sorrow."[1]

They vary very much in appearance. Some, like that of the old O'Neills of the North, who, by the

[1] Another interpretation of the word is "The Woman of Death."

way, for their Banshee reserved a special room in Shane Castle, are in the form of a beautiful girl with true Irish red-gold hair and starlike eyes. Others appear as dreadful looking hags, either nude or clad in funereal black. Banshees naturally vary, too, in their mode of demonstrating. Some, those doubtless who have the welfare of the family they haunt at heart, and lament the sad tidings they foretell, groan and moan piteously, or utter a series of heart-rending screams, which usually die away in long protracted wails of the most indescribable anguish and misery; or they clap their hands; while others, those obviously who are of a malicious or malevolent nature, either laugh derisively or chuckle diabolically. I can recall no instance of a *bonâ fide* Banshee ever knocking or rapping, which would seem to be the *modus operandi* of certain other death-warning phantasms.

The significance of the Banshee's advent is always the same. It comes invariably to warn the house it haunts of some impending disaster, generally the approaching or immediate death of one of its members.

Contrary to the general belief, perhaps, a family is not necessarily haunted by only one Banshee, or by Banshees singly; it may be haunted by numbers of Banshees that sometimes demonstrate collectively. The Galway O'Flahertys, for instance, were haunted in the following manner:

One evening, immediately before the death of a certain member of the O'Flaherty family, those nearest and dearest to him who were assembled in his room, as well as the various members of his household, heard a chorus of singularly sweet

voices singing plaintively beneath his window, and although, of course, the O'Flahertys themselves did not need to be assured that these voices were the voices of Banshees—for to those whom it haunts the Banshee makes itself known, and in no uncertain manner—it was subsequently shown, in order to satisfy sceptics, that the singing in chorus heard on this particular occasion could not possibly have been the singing of any human beings. Hence it was, I believe, unanimously concluded at the time that the Banshees attached to that particular branch of the House of O'Flaherty really had once again emphatically demonstrated their interest in the family.

To go back to the O'Briens of Thomond, the family to which, as I have already said, my ancestress Mary O'Brien belonged, it is stated that at one period of their history, in the long, long ago, their castle stood upon the ground that is now covered by Lake Inchiquin. In connection with this lake and one of the O'Brien's there is an interesting tradition,* a tradition that is still talked about and believed in. It is as follows :

In the far-off past, when fairies were in far greater evidence in Ireland than they are to-day, it was said that a cavern in the precincts of the O'Briens' castle was fairy-haunted, and that it led into unexplored fairy realms far under the ground. It being rumoured also that at a certain hour every night three beautiful fairy maidens issued from the cavern and bathed in a well of clearest spring water near by, the owner of the castle determined to put the

* *Vide* " Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celt," by Pat Kennedy. Published 1866.

whole matter to a test. Going therefore one evening to the mouth of the cavern, he secreted himself behind a rock and waited. To the impatient Chieftain the time seemed to pass very slowly, and tired of waiting he was about to withdraw, when he saw three sylph-like forms emerge from the cavern. Pouncing on the fairest of the trio, he held her fast, refusing to let her go, till she had promised to be his wife.

At last the promise was made, but not without a stipulation. "I will only consent to be your wife," said the fairy maiden, "provided you pledge me your word that, when you go out, you will come back alone, and under no circumstances whatever bring any of your friends home with you."

The Chieftain of the O'Briens pledged his word, and thereupon the beautiful fairy accompanied him to the castle, where they were married amid much gaiety and rejoicing.

In course of time two children were born to them, and all went smoothly and happily until one day the young husband felt a strong desire to attend the fair at a neighbouring town. His wife remonstrated, but he finally obtained her consent, after renewing his promise that he would return alone.

Alas for the frailty of human nature! Meeting several of his old friends at the fair, he joined in all sorts of riot and rowdyism, and while in a state of hopeless drunkenness he freely discoursed upon the mystery of his marriage. His friends then, burning with curiosity to see the fairy wife he had talked about so much, begged him to allow them to walk

just a little of the way home with him, and to this, apparently, he agreed. At all events, it was not long before the whole party, all equally inebriated, set off in the direction of the O'Brien Castle. When they had arrived, singing, shouting and jostling one another, to within a few feet of it, they were somewhat startled to see three figures, figures which the O'Brien only too quickly recognized as his wife and two children, emerge from the main entrance.

Now, no sooner did the fairy wife of the O'Brien perceive the disorderly crowd of roysterers coming towards her than the smile on her lips froze; and by the blank that now took the place of the love light in her eyes her husband, who had suddenly become completely and painfully sober, knew that every spark of affection she had once had for him he had entirely destroyed. Turning quickly aside with her children, whom she held firmly by the hand, she fled in the direction of the fairy well, and before the alarmed and conscience-stricken Chieftain could fully realize what was happening, she had thrown both the children into the placid waters of the grotto and herself plunged in after them. The waters then, so tradition avers, began to rise, and, according to the same tradition, they continued to rise with such rapidity that within a very few minutes the Chieftain and his friends, who stood spellbound, were overwhelmed and drowned, and the castle of the O'Briens completely hidden from sight.

Thus, I repeat, according to tradition, Lake Inchiquin originated; and there are people, even now, I believe, who affirm that on certain nights in the year, when there is no wind, and the leaves on the trees hang all still and motionless, strange

sounds, as of moaning and groaning, accompanied at intervals by deep sighings and wailings, may be heard coming from the bosom of the waters. These sounds they declare to be the lamentations of the once erring, now doomed, Chieftain, for his lost and much loved fairy bride.

So much for the superphysical associations of my O'Brien ancestry. I believe the Sarsfields, with whom I am also connected, my ancestress Helena Sarsfield being cousin to Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan, the redoubtable defender of Limerick against the Dutch led English, possess a ghost, although I have not been able, so far, to obtain any particulars concerning it. At a much later period my family became associated with yet another haunting, through the marriage of my grandfather, Elliot O'Donnell of Trough and Limerick, with Sarah Vize,[1] daughter of Dr. Vize of Donegal and Glenagad, co. Tipperary. The Vizes originally came from Devon.

In the seventeenth century, Joseph Vize, Esq., of Devonshire, my grandmother's progenitor, married Petronella, daughter and heiress of one Lamnell, of Pitton House. Their son settled in Ireland, where he married Mary Butler, daughter of that Butler who afterwards became the Earl of Glengall Cahir. Whether the ghost that for long years has haunted the Vizes was derived from this union with the old

[1] The name is also spelt Vyse. My grandmother's mother before her marriage was Sarah Maunsell. Her father, one of the Maunsells of Mocollop, was in direct descent from John Maunsell, Provost of Beverley, and Lord Chancellor of England, *temp.* Henry III. Her sister Frances married David Roche, her cousin. Sir David Roche, Bart., was their son, and his son Sir David, the second baronet, married Isabella, daughter of Lord Clarina.

family of Butler, or whether it was an importation from Devon, I cannot say, but certain it is that it plagued the family very much in my grandmother's time and during several decades before her.

One story of the haunting was narrated to us by my grandmother from her own experience, which occurred when she was a child and lived with her parents in an old country house in County Limerick.

The house, of which a description will help to elucidate the story, was a large, rambling, two-storeyed edifice. Dense clumps of trees grew on either side of the semi-circular sweep of gravel in front of it, and the carriage drive, forming the approach to it from the high road, probably measured close on a quarter of a mile. One of the most striking features of its exterior, however, apart from its many gabled roof and the solid masonry of its oriel windows, was the weather-beaten, iron-studded door of massive oak which formed its main entrance. This door, owing to some prejudice or superstition on the part of my great-grandfather and possibly of his father before him, lacked a knocker, although it was clear from certain plainly discernible marks on it that it had originally possessed one.

To proceed with the story. On the evening upon which the haunting took place, my grandmother with her parents and sisters sat in the drawing-room of their home, expecting the arrival of guests. The weather was threatening. Black clouds passed swiftly across the moon and temporarily obscured it, while the south-west wind whistled mournfully through the trees, and every now and then shook the ivy on the house with so much force that its

leaves tapped against the window-panes as if in angry remonstrance. Then the rain began to fall. At first it could be heard pattering on the window-sill and gravel. Later, descending in torrents, it caused the soot to come down the large old-fashioned chimney in a most unpleasant and alarming fashion. Presently, intermingled with the sound of rain and wind, came the distant rumble of wheels and clatter of hoofs.

"Listen! here they are," my great-grandfather exclaimed, dropping the paper he had been reading, and presently all, on the alert, could discern the sounds of a heavy vehicle coming towards the house at a great rate.

"They seem to be driving very fast," someone observed. "I suppose it's on account of the rain."

"Maybe", my great-grandfather said, glancing uneasily at the window, "it's coming down in sheets." As he uttered these words, he got up and went into the hall.

Those still in the drawing-room heard the vehicle stop for a moment, presumably whilst the gates were opened to allow it to pass through; they heard it come on again, urged to greater speed by the cracking of a whip, until, amid much crunching and spluttering of gravel, it came to a standstill at the front door.

Eager to be on the spot to welcome the visitors as soon as the door should be opened, everyone now adjourned to the hall, and my grandmother, child-like, rushed to the window and looked out. The next instant she gave a loud cry and fell on the floor in a faint. Confusion followed, and while my grandmother's mother and sisters ran to her aid,

her father quickly closed the shutters, forbidding anyone else to look out, and locked and bolted the front door. He then summoned the servants (the elder ones, by the way, knowing instinctively what was happening, had already joined the family in the hall), and after he had assured himself that no one was absent he bade everyone kneel down, whilst he prayed aloud to Heaven to protect them from the evil and ghostly influences that were threatening them from outside.

Whilst he was thus engaged a terrific knocking on the front door commenced (apparently the person knocking was making use of a heavy iron knocker, although, it must be remembered, no knocker was there), and after continuing for some minutes, during which time my great-grandfather prayed more and more earnestly, abruptly ceased.

Then, after a brief pause, the terrified household, still on their knees, heard the carriage drive away at the same furious pace as it had come.

My grandmother, who at first appeared to be stricken dumb by the terrible sight she had seen, subsequently described her experience in the following words :

"What I saw," she said, "when I looked out of the window, was an enormous hearse-like vehicle with great sable plumes, that kept tossing to and fro in the wind ; but what appalled me so was the sight of the horses and driver. The horses were huge, and both they and the driver were headless."

CHAPTER III

MORE FAMILY EXPERIENCES

If my paternal genealogy may be deemed interesting, both psychically and historically, from the references I have made to it in the preceding chapters, I think the same may be said of my maternal ancestry.

Born Elizabeth Harrison, my mother was one of a family who, although they lived for many years in Leicestershire, were very probably, according to one authority in genealogies, of Welsh extraction[1]. My great-grandfather, Thomas Chapman Harrison, married Elizabeth Fowke,[2] eldest daughter of John Fowke, of Elmsthorpe, Leicestershire, and it is to her lineage that I owe so much of the interest attaching to mine. There would seem to be little doubt that through the Cottons and Halfords, Elizabeth Fowke was descended from Richard, second son of William de Coton, who was killed in the Wars of the Roses at St. Albans; and it was this same William de Coton who obtained the acknowledgment at Court that his family were of Blood Royal, owing to their descent from Robert Bruce

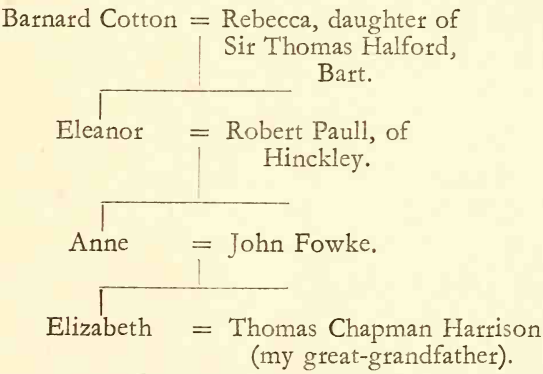
[1] Admirers of the late Frederic Harrison, the distinguished positivist and essayist, may be interested to know that in Isaac Harrison, my great-great-grandfather, Frederic Harrison and I share an ancestor in common. Frederic Harrison's grandfather and my great-grandfather were brothers.

[2] There are some interesting notes about the families of Fowke, Halford and Paull in the "History and Antiquities of Leicestershire,"

through Mary de Wesenham. The Cottons of Steeple Gedding and Cotton Wall were descended from this William de Coton, but his family in the male line is now said to be extinct.

Through her great-grandmother, Rebecca Halford was descended from Sir Richard Fiennes, created Baron Say and Sele by James I, from the unfortunate Lord Say and Sele, beheaded during the Insurrection of Jack Cade, from Guy de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and from Edward Shuckburgh of Naseby,[1] and my mother, who was, I believe, as I have already suggested, in touch with the other world far more than most people, often referred to this ancient

by John Nichols, F.S.A. (Vol. IV, Part 2, pages 605, 628, 724). The line that links these families to that of my mother runs thus:


Barnard Cotton = Rebecca, daughter of Sir Thomas Halford, Bart.
Eleanor = Robert Paull, of Hinckley.
Anne = John Fowke.
Elizabeth = Thomas Chapman Harrison (my great-grandfather).

My great-great-grandfather, John Fowke, had in his house at Elmsthorpe, Leicestershire, a small museum containing some valuable curiosities, among others a letter from King Charles I, and also one from Charles II; a broken sword and antique bridle from Bosworth Field; a remnant of Wickliff's vestment; and an ancient Saxon crucifix. His collection of coins was deemed to be the best in Leicestershire. Quaint illustrations of some of the curios appear in the aforesaid work by John Nichols.

[1] According to John Nichols (Vol. IV, p. 628, "History and Antiquities of Leicestershire") this Edward Shuckburgh was descended from the Emperor Charlemagne. He was also of kin to William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester and founder of Winchester College.

lineage, of which she was surely only reasonably proud, and from which, I have no doubt, she derived much of what would be termed, nowadays, her "psychic faculty."

She had many psychic experiences, when, as a girl, she lived with her parents in a badly haunted house some ten or twelves miles from Northampton. Her bedroom in this house was separated from the rest of the bedrooms by a long and gloomy corridor. One night she was awakened by feeling something heavy jump on the bed. Wondering what on earth it could be, she raised herself to look, and in the moonlight saw a huge black cat seated at the foot of the bed, glaring at her. Knowing there was no such cat in the house and feeling much alarmed in consequence, she struck a light, only to find, however, that the cat had vanished. Thinking it must be somewhere in hiding, though she had not heard it jump off the bed, she searched the room thoroughly ; but it was nowhere to be found, and the door and windows, it being winter and the weather intensely cold, were shut.

Much mystified and feeling still very much frightened, for all was now hushed and silent and there was a strange, eerie feeling in the atmosphere, she got back into bed ; but she had not been there long before something sprang on her, and this frightened her so much that she shrieked. Fortunately, her parents, although they were some little distance off, heard her, and came running to see what was the matter. They looked everywhere, but there was no sign of any cat, and they went back to their room, declaring she must either have imagined it or have been dreaming.

Nothing further happened that night, but subsequently at frequent intervals she saw the phantom cat, not only in her room at night, but sometimes in broad daylight, in various parts of the house; and in after years she learned that the phantasm of a cat was one of the ghosts that had haunted the house for many generations. On another occasion, this time in the summer, she awoke one night, with a start, to find the room aglow with a strange, reddish light. Upon looking around, to find the cause of the light, she saw that it emanated from a fire burning brightly in the grate, and that seated in front of the fire, with his back turned towards her, was a man in a blue tailed coat, holding a baby in long clothes on his lap. As she watched this man, more fascinated than frightened, he suddenly bent down, stirred the fire into a fierce blaze with a poker, and then, springing up, threw the baby into the flames. My mother was then so shocked that she fainted. Later, when she recovered and opened her eyes, the room was in darkness, save for the moonlight, the grate was black and empty, and nothing whatever remained to remind her of the tragedy she had but just witnessed. However, the horror of it all so unnerved her that she felt she could never sleep in that room again. Her parents, therefore, at her earnest request, allowed her to occupy another room, although they did not encourage her in attributing her experience to the supernatural. After this, she had no more disturbed nights, but she experienced a ghostly happening in broad daylight that alarmed her more than any of her former experiences.

She, my mother, was walking with her old nurse in the grounds of the house (they were the only two

at home, the rest of the household having gone to a neighbouring town where some special fête was in progress), when my mother, finding that she had left something she wanted in her bedroom, ran indoors to fetch it. Having got it, she set off to rejoin her nurse, and being anxious to do so quickly, she cut through the housekeeper's room and along a stone paved passage leading to a side entrance that was seldom used, at least by the family. Upon crossing the housekeeper's room, she heard a noise behind her, and on looking back saw that the handle of a cupboard door, an inset cupboard, occupying almost the whole length of one wall, was turning round, as if manipulated by someone inside the cupboard who was about to come out. The door, in fact, being now unlatched, my mother in a paroxysm of terror turned and fled, and I can only add, from her description of the footsteps she heard coming after her, that, in my opinion, the object that emerged from the cupboard and which, had she waited, she would, in all probability, have seen was nothing belonging to this world. Fortunately, as the door at the end of the passage was open, thus affording a free outlet to the garden, my mother did not fall into the clutches of her pursuer, and when she had recovered from her breathlessness and fright, she was, I am glad to say, none the worse for her adventure.

But nothing would have induced my mother and her old nurse to return to the house alone. Presently, however, some of the servants returned from the fête, and in their company my mother again passed through the housekeeper's room. Instinctively, of course, her eyes sought the cupboard, and she

particularly noticed that its door, which she had last seen open, was now tightly shut.

According to a tradition in the village a murder of a very heinous character had been committed in the house many years previously, and therefore, chiefly at my mother's instigation, boards were taken up and various excavations made, in the expectation of finding bones ; but nothing was ever discovered, excepting a long, disused well in the garden, and amongst the rubbish with which it had been filled in a blunderbuss, possibly somewhat over a hundred years old. After my grandparents left the house, it was, I believe, partly pulled down and reconstructed ; anyhow, I am told, it is no longer haunted.[1] Yet another ghost belonging to this period, of which I have heard my mother speak, is the ghost that was said, about that time,[2] periodically to haunt the grounds of Althorpe House, the home of the Spencers. The story my mother told of it was to the effect that someone, a man whom she knew, visiting in the neighbourhood, and anxious to get a glimpse of the famous old house, was peering one morning over an iron fence on the outskirts of the estate, when he noticed a man in corduroy breeches and striped shirt, whom he took to be a groom, leaning against the trunk of a tree, staring at him. " I say, my man," the visitor exclaimed, " would it be possible for me to see over the house ? Are the family at home ? "

The man did not reply, but simply went on staring. Thinking be might be deaf, the visitor repeated his

[1] This would be in the early forties of the last century.

[2] I understand this haunting has long ago ceased. It is referred to in " Haunted Houses and Family Legends of Great Britain," by John H. Ingram.

question in a louder voice, and then, as there was still no answer, he came to the conclusion that the man, though he might be deaf, was, in any case, very rude, and walked on. A few minutes later he saw another man, whom he also took to be some sort of an employé on the estate, and putting the same questions to him, he was at once informed, with much civility, that the family were at home, and that the house was not open just then to the public. Thanking this man for his politeness, and realizing, perhaps, for the first time, that in the silence and apparent incivility of the man to whom he had first spoken there was really something rather unnatural, the visitor told his polite informant of the strange behaviour of the man he had previously encountered, and asked him if he knew who the fellow was, and why he had been so silent.

"I'm sure I can't say, sir," the man who was thus questioned replied. "It's certainly queer, very queer, and doesn't sound a bit like any of our chaps; they're such a very decent lot. Besides, they're all busy in the stables in the morning, and never come in this direction, unless it's for a stroll after their day's work is done. What was he like?"

The visitor described him, and as he did so, carefully entering into every detail of the man's appearance and dress, he noticed a curious expression creep into his interrogator's face.

"Well, I never!" the latter at length exclaimed in astonishment. "You may or may not believe what I say, sir, but as true as I stand here you've seen the ghost." He then went on to explain that years before, a groom, answering so exactly to the description of the figure the visitor had just en-

countered that there could be no doubt that the two were identical, had died under somewhat tragic circumstances while in the late Earl's employ, and that his ghost had been subsequently seen, so it was said, in the grounds.

The psychic faculty (or what, in my opinion, would be more correctly designated the attraction towards and for the Unknown) so apparent in my mother was possessed almost as conspicuously by one of her aunts, whose experience my mother was very fond of narrating. The following is one of them. She, my mother's aunt, who was staying at the time with her people near Dover, then a very fashionable seaside resort, went for a walk one morning with her governess, along a country road, and on their arrival at the bottom of a steep hollow, skirted on one side by a spinney and on the other by a pool of water, they saw two evil-looking tramps emerge from the trees and advance menacingly towards them. Pulling themselves together with difficulty, for they were almost paralysed with fright, and determining to resist the attack, from which apparently there was no escape, the men being now within a few feet of them, they were in some measure prepared for the worst, when the sound of a pistol shot, coming, so it seemed, from immediately behind them, accompanied, at the same moment, by the sudden appearance of a huge St. Bernard dog by the side of them, apparently so terrified the tramps that they ran helter-skelter away, and quickly disappeared in the spinney, the St. Bernard dog following closely on their heels.

Overjoyed at their unexpected deliverance, my

aunt and her governess hurried home, and after they had poured out a breathless account of what had happened, one of my great-aunt's relatives, who seemed hardly able to restrain her excitement, explained :

"Your story does indeed surprise me. I never imagined before that ghosts could be of any practical use, but now I know they can, for your escape is, undoubtedly, due to them."

She then went on to explain that years ago, a man, said to be a stranger in those parts, had been found in the spinney shot dead, and close beside him a large St. Bernard dog, similarly slain. Owing to lack of evidence, however, it was never known for certain whether the man had been murdered or had committed suicide. Hence the affair remained a mystery, and ever after, so it was said, the hollow had been haunted, the phenomena manifesting there being a phantom dog and the sound of a pistol shot.

A ghost story my mother used to tell more graphically, perhaps, than any, concerned a certain nobleman's seat in the Midlands.

A guest at this house (a friend, and if I remember rightly, a relative of my mother's), happening to be indisposed one evening, did not go down to dinner, but remained upstairs seated by the fire in her bedroom, trying somewhat unsuccessfully to read. Presently, feeling strongly yet unaccountably urged to do so, she glanced round at the floor, and there, in the centre of it, a remarkable sight presented itself. The carpet, instead of lying flat, as it usually did, bulged perceptibly, and a moment later there rose, inch by inch, until at length it stood fully

revealed, from top to toe, the entire figure of a woman. She was clad in a dress of the coarsest material, her black hair hung in matted curls over her ears and neck, a bright-coloured shawl covered her shoulders, and in her arms she carried an infant. After remaining stationary for some seconds, this apparition, whose face, I have omitted to say, bore the unmistakable evidence of having been long since dead, turned slowly round, and walking with a peculiar gliding motion, crossed the floor in the direction of a cupboard, let in the wall on the far side of the room, and there disappeared from view.

My mother's friend, who, whilst the phenomenon lasted, had been powerless to move, feeling, as she afterwards told us, like a wretched little rabbit in the presence of a snake, now experienced a kind of reaction, and her faculties vigorously reasserting themselves, she ran out of the room, firmly resolved never to set foot in it again. Lady ——, my mother's friend, immediately apprised of what had happened, was most apologetic and distressed. She confessed that she had given her guest the haunted room in the full knowledge that it was haunted, but she declared, with many expressions of regret, that she certainly would not have done so, had there been any other room available, and had she not, she added, really thought that she, my mother's friend, was one of those people who "never see ghosts." The explanation that Lady —— gave of the haunting was that many years previously, probably at the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century, a gipsy woman and her child were said to have been murdered in the house, and their bodies so mysteriously hidden on the premises that, despite many

thorough searches for them, they had never been found.

After narrating this story, my mother used to add that, according to report, skeletons believed to be those of the murdered woman and her child were subsequently discovered under the floor of the room her friend had occupied, but whether this report was a true one or not, she had never been able to ascertain.

In addition to her other psychic powers my mother possessed a power of intuition that was often wonderful. Her instinct seemed invariably to warn her of any approaching danger, and to put her on her guard against persons who were evilly disposed.

She rarely, if ever, acted contrary to her intuitions regarding character, but on one occasion she did.

"I wish I hadn't engaged that girl," I remember hearing her say one day, with reference to a maid she had just taken into her service.

"Why?" someone asked. "She seems capable and well-behaved."

"So she may be," my mother rejoined, "but she's a thief, I'm sure. She has the fingers of a thief and the manners of one."

This proved to be correct, for the girl hadn't been with us long before trifling things began to disappear. She was watched, and fortunately caught red-handed in a small theft, when on the eve, as she admitted afterwards, of planning a much bigger one. The girl being very young, my mother did not prosecute her, but got her into some institution, where she was well looked after; but all the same I believe she eventually became an habitual criminal.

The same quickness in recognizing nature's

danger-signals shown by my mother seems to have characterised another member of the family, whose experience in this connection on a certain occasion is, I think, worth recording. For it relates to Madeline Smith, the notorious principal in the Glasgow poisoning case of 1857.

Some little while after this trial, my mother's relative, whom for convenience sake I will call Miss C——, when at some social function, sat opposite a girl, a complete stranger to her, whose face so fascinated her that she could not help staring at it.

"Rather a pretty girl, isn't she?" a friend of Miss C——'s remarked, following the direction of her gaze. "Such a charming complexion and mouth. But I don't quite like the eyes. They are beautiful enough in shape and colour, but too hard. I have only seen that steeliness in the eyes of one other woman, and that woman was a murderess. She was Mrs. Manning, the woman who, aided by her husband, murdered Patrick O'Connor. I saw her on several occasions when, as Marie de Roux, she was maid to the Duchess of Sutherland, and I was so struck with the glit in her eyes, a glit that seemed to me to portray all and more than all the cruelty of some beast of prey, that I couldn't help alluding to it, when in conversation with one of the Duchess's most intimate friends, in the hope that a report of what I thought might reach the ears of the Duchess, to whom it might serve as a warning. The eyes of the girl opposite are more beautifully formed, but they are identical in expression. What do you think about them?"

"I think exactly as you do about her eyes," Miss C—— whispered, still gazing at the girl critically,

" but her ears impress me the most. I have never before seen human ears set so low down and so far back, and I feel sure that such a curious setting must indicate some extraordinary idiosyncrasy or abnormality in the character. I wonder who she is."

" I'll try and find out," Miss C——'s friend replied, and getting up, he began a tour of the room, stopping every now and again to speak to someone whom he thought might be able to tell him what he wanted to know. Some minutes later he returned, and seating himself once again beside Miss C——, whispered in her ear:

" I've found out who she is. She's Madeline Smith, the very same Madeline Smith that was accused of having poisoned her lover, and, after a long trial, acquitted."

CHAPTER IV

GHOSTLY PHENOMENA IN CONNECTION WITH MY FATHER'S DEATH AND MY FIRST EXPERIENCE OF THE UNKNOWN

I will commence this chapter with a brief account of my father's death, the strange circumstances that led up to it, and the mysterious happenings that accompanied it. As I have already stated, his vocation was that of a clergyman of the Church of England, and it was while he was awaiting preferment from one living to another that he decided to go for a trip with a clergyman friend of his to Palestine.

The two travelled together as far as Alexandria, but there they parted, my father suddenly, and for no apparently adequate reason, changing his plans, and instead of continuing his journey to Palestine, deciding to go to Abyssinia with a certain Englishman, a member of a well-known London banker's family, whom he had met for the first time on the voyage out.

One evening, about three weeks later, my mother was sitting alone in the drawing-room of our old home in Ireland. It was a wild night; the rain was coming down in torrents and the wind howling round the house and down the chimney with demoniacal fury. There was no gas in the house, and my

mother, finding the lamplight somewhat trying to the eyes, had given up all attempts to read. Leaning back in her chair, which she had drawn up close to the hearth, she amused herself by watching the grotesque shadows on the panelled walls and ceiling, and trying to discover their material counterparts.

Gradually, however, succumbing to the warmth from the fire and the soft, soothing sound of the ashes, as they fell out of the grate on to the hearth, she relapsed into a gentle doze.

She was awakened by a loud crash. Jumping up from her chair in a fright, she found that one of the windows had been burst open by the storm, which was raging more furiously than ever, and that a screen standing near it had been knocked over. She was about to replace it, when from the hall outside there came a series of the most appalling screams. Wondering what on earth was the matter, my mother at once ran to the door and opened it. All the servants were collected in a group listening.

"What has happened? What is it?" my mother asked, gazing in astonishment at the pale faces in front of her.

"Sure, mum, it's the Banshee," the old cook replied. "I know her voice well, there's no mistaking her. Didn't I hear her a'wailing and a'groaning round the house the night the master died, and didn't my mither hear her a'doing of the same the night the Colonel died, seventy-two years ago this very day? Hark! There she is again."

And as she spoke there was a repetition of the sounds, only this time they seemed to come from another part of the house.

My mother said afterwards it was difficult to

describe the sounds, because they were utterly unlike anything she had ever heard before. They seemed to be a strange blending of a woman's voice with a something wholly unearthly, which she instinctively felt could only come from another world. Beginning in a low key, the sounds gradually rose into a series of screams of the most awful intensity and then, as gradually dying away, ending in a wail that was truly heartrending.

At first my mother thought the voice was speaking, and she tried hard to catch the words, but was unable to do so. When she commented on this fact to the old cook, the latter at once exclaimed :

" 'Tis no wonder, mum, that you couldn't hear what the Bansee said, seeing that you're not an O'Donnell. The O'Donnell Banshee only makes herself understood to an O'Donnell, though it is the likes of us all at this blessed minute that can hear her. She's after letting us know that one of the Trough O'Donnells will be dying somewhere this very night. Ochone, Ochone."

The sounds continued for some little time longer, and then ceased. Simultaneously the storm abated and there was unusual silence. My mother and some of the servants went out into the grounds, but nothing was to be seen, save the long row of naked, motionless trees facing the house, and the long, leaden-looking line of the distant river that formed a boundary to the grounds.

Nothing further happened that night; but the following night, at about twelve o'clock, the whole household were aroused by a loud hammering that seemed to come from the cellars of the house. Then, after a while, the hammering ceased, and

footsteps, which were recognized by all the grown-ups of the household who were listening as my father's, ascended the stairs. They came right up, pausing for a few seconds outside each of the bedroom doors, until finally they arrived at the night nursery on the top landing. My old nurse, who slept in the night nursery, then saw the door slowly open a few inches, and whilst a light, that looked like the light from a candle, appeared on the threshold, a voice, which she recognized as that of my father, spoke, but spoke so quickly that she could not understand a word of what was said. She was, of course, far too frightened to utter a sound, let alone make herself known to the speaker, and as soon as the voice ceased, the light was withdrawn and the door closed. The steps then retraced their way downstairs and nothing more was heard that night.

The following night, however, at the same time, the same phenomena occurred, and they occurred repeatedly every night, without intermission, for a period of six weeks, when they abruptly ceased. After each fresh occurrence of the phenomena, those who experienced them and believed them to be due to the spirit of my father made up their minds afresh to try and overcome their fear sufficiently to speak the next time they occurred, but when the next time arrived, the same thing happened; fear, or something, invariably prevented them from uttering a sound. And so, in this case, as in most cases of *bonâ fide* haunting, there was no communication, the grave held its secret, the Unknown remained the Unknown.

These nightly disturbances, following on her experience of the Banshee, naturally made my mother

very apprehensive regarding the safety of my father, but she heard no news of him, ill or otherwise, till about four weeks after the disturbances began. She then received a letter from the French Consul at Massowah stating that her husband, the Rev. Henry O'Donnell, had died at Arkiko, a village on the Red Sea coast, under circumstances that strongly suggested foul play.[1]

My mother subsequently received communications from various people in Massowah, all of whom were of the same opinion as the French Consul with regard to the death of my father, and there is no doubt whatever that he was murdered by a gang of European adventurers, scoundrels of the worst type, who making a certain hotel in Massowah their headquarters robbed and murdered any stranger with money who fell into their hands. What is of particular interest here, however, is the fact that my father's death took place at noon on the day after the Banshee had been heard in his home by his wife and their several servants.

After an interval of eight years, the Banshee again demonstrated its presence in the same house, but on this occasion it was the malevolent Banshee, and it was not only heard, but, by one of the members of my family, it was seen. What happened was this. One winter afternoon, my youngest sister was going upstairs to the top landing, when she was brought to a sudden halt by the appearance of a strangely unpleasant face looking down at her from over the balustrade.

Long and narrow, and crowned with a mass of matted, tow-coloured hair, it emitted a yellowish

[1] *Vide* " The Oriental Zigzag," by Charles Hamilton.

green light; and as my sister gazed up at it, almost petrified with horror, its pale, obliquely set eyes seemed to smile evilly. For some seconds my sister was too spellbound to move, but at last, tearing herself away from the spot, she ran helter-skelter downstairs, and, as she did so, the whole house echoed and re-echoed with loud peals of satanical laughter. As before, the servants assembled in the hall, terrified at the sounds, and it was the old nurse who proclaimed them to be due to the Banshee. This Banshee, however, was not the Banshee that had been heard before my father's death, but that termed in our family the Malevolent Banshee; and the purpose of its advent was soon demonstrated, for a few days after my sister saw it an O'Donnell aunt of ours died, and exactly a week after its manifestation my mother died.

My own experience of a Banshee did not occur till many years later. I will refer to it in due course, and before closing this chapter of early reminiscences briefly narrate the story of my first encounter with a ghost, which, needless to say, took place in the same house, the house in Ireland that was temporarily haunted by the phantasm of my father, and wherein the two Banshees to which I have but just referred had been heard to demonstrate.

I was about five years old when I had my first conscious experience of a ghost, and in accordance with the custom then observed in most properly conducted households, I had been put to bed at a very early hour in the evening. Indeed, so early was it that the sun was still shining, and the light came even through the blinds which were drawn, prevented me from going to sleep. As I was lying on

my side, trying to relieve the awful boredom of my own company by counting the spots on the counterpane of the bed parallel with mine, the door handle suddenly gave a little click. I at once, of course, glanced round at it, and observed that it was being very slowly turned. Wondering who was outside and attributing their slowness in entering the room to a supposition on their part that I was asleep, I watched the slowly moving handle with the most absorbing interest. Gradually, very gradually, the door opened, and when, at length, it had opened, perhaps a couple of feet, an extraordinary figure suddenly shot into view, and taking up its position against the wall just inside the room, it stood and regarded me with the greatest intentness.

It appeared to me to be about six feet high, that is to say about the same height as a certain tradesman who came regularly every morning for orders, and whom I had heard the servants say was " a good six feet." I also thought it looked very strong and powerful, but the extreme length of its arms and the massiveness of its head, which was disproportionately large for its body, imparted to it a grotesqueness that was considerably increased by its being nude and covered in places with large yellow spots.

Its eyes were of a yellowish green and sphinx-like. There was, indeed, nothing in the face to denote the thing's attitude towards me, whether hostile, friendly or merely indifferent.

It stood staring at me fixedly for some minutes, and then turning round, walked out of the room, closing the door noiselessly behind it. When I spoke about it in the morning to my mother, she

told me I must have been dreaming, and it was not until several years later, after her death, that I learned for the first time that the house was haunted and that other people besides myself had seen strange, inexplicable shapes in it. I am reminded by this reference to queer shapes of something I once saw at the Devil's Bridge, near Aberystwyth. One August afternoon, about four years after my first encounter with a ghost, I was descending the steep pathway leading to what is very appropriately known as the Devil's Punch Bowl, when, involuntarily looking behind me, I saw a tall, shadowy figure suddenly bound across the track and disappear in the dense foliage.

If I were asked to liken it to something, I should say it more closely resembled one of those old-fashioned wooden Dutch dolls that were in vogue some forty or more years ago than anything else. It had the same kind of thin, long arms and legs, that appeared to move all in a piece, and a perfectly round head, somewhat too small for its body. Owing to the shade from the trees and the speed with which it moved, for it simply flashed across the pathway, I could not see its features with any degree of distinctness, but the impression conveyed to me in its momentary transit was that of a decidedly grotesque countenance, indeed, a mere caricature of a human face. It did not strike me as being in any way evil or antagonistic. Later on, when we were all driving back to Aberystwyth in the wagonette we had hired for the occasion, I mentioned the incident to the driver and asked him if he could in any way account for it.

"Well," he replied, "they do say around here as

how the valleys of the Rheidol and Mynach are both haunted, more particularly, perhaps, the Punch Bowl and the old Devil's Bridge itself. I can't say that I've ever seen anything there myself, but my father used to say he once saw the Canhywllau Cyrth[1] on the old bridge the night a farmer friend of his in the valley died; and my grandmother declared she saw the Neuaddlywd Toili[2] cross the new bridge over the gorge the day before one of her sisters was buried.

I had another experience of a Welsh haunting the following year in Penmaenmaur, where I was spending the summer holidays. I was awakened one night by the most extraordinary noise. It was like a loud flapping of wings, and it was accompanied by a curious croaking and groaning. This combination of queer sounds seemed to come from the street (my bedroom was in the front of the house and looked on to the street), and after continuing for some minutes it abruptly ceased. In the morning I described what I had heard to our landlady, a middle-aged Welsh woman, and she said, "It was the Gwrach y Rhibyn, or Hag of the Dribble. My husband and I both heard it, and Mrs. Thomas over the way saw it beating its wings against the window frames of her room and looking in at her. One of her children is ill, and she says she is sure the Gwrach y Rhibyn came for it and that it won't last through the day." She then went on to explain to me that the Gwrach y

[1] Corpse candles, *i.e.* a ghostly phenomenon in the shape of a candle flame. It invariably prognosticates a death: if big, the death of an adult; if very small, that of a child.

[2] A phantom funeral procession common to most parts of Wales. It is never seen saving before the real funeral of someone in the immediate neighbourhood.

Rhibyn is a strange shadowy form resembling in part a dreadful old hag with skull-like face and evil, gleaming eyes, and, in part, a monstrous bat. She said it only haunted people of genuine old Welsh extraction and never came to them excepting before a death. If it were heard merely to flap its wings and groan, then it portended the death of some more or less distant relative of the family it haunted, but if it were seen looking in at the window or heard calling anyone by name, then, without a doubt, it portended the death of the person named, or one of the family in the house, as the case might be. I asked her if it were usual for others than relatives or members of the haunted family to hear it, and she said :

" No, not unless they have Welsh blood in them." I then told her that I had a strain of Welsh blood in me, and she replied :

" Then, I've no doubt you did hear the Gwrach y Rhibyn in the night," adding with a look of grim certainty, " That Thomas child will be dead before morning." And sure enough what she said was true, for late that evening we ascertained that the " Thomas child," who had been ill for some time, had suddenly taken a turn for the worse and was dead.

I had another curious experience a few days after this. I was walking one afternoon with my old nurse (I must here explain that my old nurse, now that I no longer needed her care, acted as maid to my relatives, and always went away with us) along a lane near Penmaenmaur, when I noticed a solitary willow growing by a pool of water on one side of the road, swaying about in a very peculiar manner.

Although the day was piping hot, and there was no wind, it seemed as if the tree were shaking violently in the throes of a great storm. I commented on the fact to my old nurse, but she made no reply; instead, she quickened her pace, almost to a run, and I noticed to my surprise that she had turned very pale and seemed greatly agitated. It was not until we had got back to Penmaenmaur that I could prevail upon her to say a word, and it was then only by dint of much coaxing on my part. However, when the landlady came into the sitting-room to lay the tea, my old nurse's tongue seemed suddenly loosened. She told her of the walk we had taken, and asked her if there was anything wrong with the solitary willow growing by the pool in the lane.

"You mean the lane running in the direction of Llangelvin?" our landlady enquired. "Because they do say that's haunted. One or two people have from time to time been found drowned in the pool, and there is a story about some old tramp hanging himself on the tree. Anyhow, the spot has got a bad name, and the people round here don't care for passing it after dark, especially if they're alone."

"Well, I don't need to be told that the tree's haunted," my old nurse said, "for as sure as I'm alive I saw a skeleton in a winding-sheet sitting on one of its branches; and it was he that made the tree shake. He was swaying to and fro and laughing at us as we went by."

CHAPTER V

FAIRIES, LEPRECHAUNS AND GHOSTS

Much has been written recently about fairies, but chiefly about English or Welsh fairies, and these, it would seem, differ very much from the fairies that haunt certain districts in the south and west of Ireland. A connection of mine, whom I will call Mr. B——, a near relative of Lady Griffin, whose sad death at Vienna, last autumn, came as a great shock to her relatives and many friends, once had a remarkable encounter with fairies on the road between Ballinantly and Hospital, in County Limerick. He was driving home one evening in his side car, accompanied only by his servant, Dunkley, when, on coming to a particularly lonely part of the road, his horse shied, and then stood still, trembling violently. Dunkley, catching hold of Mr. B——, cried out that the fairies were trying to pull him off the car, and Mr. B——, looking behind him and seeing a number of tiny forms crowding in a menacing manner round the car, realized that what Dunkley said might be true, since the fairies had actually besieged them and certainly appeared to be bent on mischief. Not knowing how else to get rid of them, Mr. B—— gave his horse a sharp cut with the whip, causing it to prance and rear and finally break away in a mad gallop; and this apparently

had the desired effect, for the fairies were speedily left far away in the rear.

Mr. B——'s sister, who told me this story of fairy haunting, vouches for its truth, which I myself do not doubt, having seen fairies when I was staying in an old house in County Wicklow. I used to watch them in the evening, indoors, when no one was about, moving silently to and fro in one corner of my room, and out of doors in a certain field not far from the house. They had none of that chocolate box prettiness one sees in pictures and photographs of English fairies, no bright filmy green costumes, no glittering wings; they were colourless, mere shadows, in height, perhaps, a couple of feet or thereabouts, in form, simply fantastic and grotesque. They were, in fact, as unlike the fairies one hears about in England as the dancers of the Irish jig on the London stage are unlike the real Irish dancers in Ireland.

Well, I watched these fairies night after night, and I never once heard them utter a sound. They kept on moving about as if in a maze, but they did so, from first to last, in absolute silence.

The Leprechaun is a species of fairy that is, perhaps, as peculiarly Irish as the Banshee; but, unlike the Banshee, it would seem never to go out of its own country; and although it appears, like the Banshee, only to those who have at least a strain of genuine old Irish blood in them, it haunts districts rather than families, and may be described as either friendly, or simply mischievous, but never malevolent or diabolical. Also, it is invariably seen in the form of an old man, and it is often shadowy, though not by any means lacking in colour. Not

infrequently it is portrayed as wearing a red round-about, red breeches, black stockings, and a cocked hat that gives it a kind of Punch-like appearance. It is credited with befriending those it likes and annoying those who have, in some way or another, incurred its dislike.

A strange case of what was believed at the time might be Leprechauns occurred early last century in Ireland. An old woman in County Cork called Anne Roche, no relation, by the way, of Sir David Roche, Bart., was indicted at the Assizes for the murder of her grandson, Michael Leahy. Michael Leahy, although about four years of age, could neither stand, walk, nor speak, and was consequently believed by his relatives and neighbours to be "fairy-struck." It therefore came about that Anne Roche, who was accused of having taken him down to a pool and there kept his head forced under the water till he was drowned, asserted in her defence that she was told by three friendly male fairies, whom she met one day in a wood, that if she bathed the boy three consecutive mornings in the pool, taking good care to immerse the whole of him in the water, the evil spirit that obsessed him would be driven out and he would subsequently enjoy the full use of all his limbs and faculties. Denying any intent to injure the boy, she declared she was only trying to carry out the fairies' instructions; and the jury, believing her story, returned a verdict of not guilty. My grandmother, a cousin of Sir David Roche, said she had often been past the spot where Anne Roche declared she had met the fairies, and although she never saw anything, she often felt, when passing, that some uncanny presence lurked there.

The Pookah, also a kind of fairy peculiar to parts of Ireland, would seem to have no one very definite form, but to appear in various forms, sometimes adopting that of a horse, at other times that of a pig, and so on ; seldom, however, appearing as a human being.

It is generally mischievous, if not, indeed, actually antagonistic, but would seem to confine its manifestations chiefly to the peasantry, rarely appearing to the more educated of the Irish people.

Before passing on to the time when I was grown up and actually in quest of ghosts, I must refer to one or two more ghostly experiences that interested me very much as a boy.

To begin with, I remember a big, lone house in Dublin that had the reputation of being the worst haunted house, not only in Dublin, but in all Ireland. Rumour said that a Spanish nobleman had rented it for awhile, in the eighteenth century, from a well-known Kildare family to whom it belonged, and that it was after his departure that it first acquired the reputation of being haunted. It was imposing and gloomy enough in appearance, with its high, narrow windows and massive front door, that looked as if it had been fashioned to withstand a siege. I can recall a picture of it as it stood facing me in the full glare of a fierce July sun. The grass and weeds grew in profusion on the stone steps leading up to the entrance, and the chimney pots were so cracked and slantwise that a big gust of wind, one imagined, must bring them crashing to the ground. I never crossed the threshold, and it was only in the broadest of daylight, when the sun was shining merrily and the noise of the traffic in the

streets all around me rendered me momentarily bold, that I ever dared approach the cracked and broken windows near enough to peer through them into the awful gloom beyond.

But what a magnificent house it was, with its wide flagged hall, broad staircase and oak-panelled rooms, rooms that had once no doubt echoed to the sound of many voices, but which now were absolutely still. According to rumour, the house had stood empty since the last tenants, a Colonel and his wife, had taken an abrupt departure, scared away by the ghosts. Wild screams and music were alleged to be heard proceeding from it on certain nights in the year, and the face of a dreadful-looking hag was said to be sometimes seen peering out of one of the windows.

Indeed, I heard many such tales when I was staying with my people in Ely Place, in the neighbourhood, by the way, of the Queen's Service Academy,[1] where I afterwards studied, and a boy named Maunsell,[2] one of my numerous cousins, among other stories relating to the house in question told me the following :

I should, perhaps, prefix this story with the remark that I had never known young Maunsell to make up, and that he took his solemn oath that what he narrated to me on this occasion was *bonâ fide* fact.

He said that, anxious to put what he had heard about the place to the test, he went there one night, unknown to his parents. Finding that he was unable to get into the house by climbing through a

[1] Dr. Chetwode Crawley's.

[2] The Maunsells had lately added to their illustrious family tree a connection with the Norburys, through a marriage with the first Earl.

window as he had fondly hoped, he eventually mounted one of the window-sills and remained there, in a decidedly cramped and uncomfortable posture, peering in through the broken glass. At first nothing happened, and he was beginning to get bored, when suddenly the plaintive sounds of an old-world spinet, proceeding, so he thought, from the upper part of the house, gave him a distinct thrill. The music stopped abruptly, however, and almost immediately afterwards he heard hurrying footsteps, and saw, through the wide open door of the room he was looking into, a young and beautiful girl, clad in the costume of a bygone age, come racing down the broad oak stairs into the hall. A few seconds later, a wild scream of fear and agony, ghastly in its intensity, and full of meaning, almost froze young Maunsell's blood, but before he had time to descend from his perch an old woman came into the room and approached the window. He was then transfixed with horror, and he told me that every detail in the old woman's appearance was indelibly impressed upon his memory. He said that she wore an extraordinary costume—a skirt something like a crinoline and yet not a crinoline (he thought it must have been what they styled in former days a hoop), a multi-coloured shawl, and a white cap, the crimpled border of which fitted closely round her face, that was white as a corpse, and full of wrinkles, and leering. Furthermore, a gruesome light seemed to emanate from all over her, and as her dark, evil eyes met Maunsell's, she raised a clenched fist and shook it menacingly at him.

He did not then wait to find a foothold, he simply fell from the window-sill, which was fairly high up,

on to the ground, and picking himself up, luckily more frightened than hurt, ran all the way home. The adventure, of course, quite cured his curiosity with regard to ghosts, and he never ventured near the house again at nightfall. I do not know what subsequently happened to the place, but I believe it was eventually pulled down.

Among the ghostly experiences of my boyhood is one relating to what is, perhaps, the most fascinating and intensely interesting of all the Irish hauntings, I mean that of the old churchyard[1] of Eringle Truagh, County Monaghan. My grandmother and her cousin, David Roche,[2] when children, visited the spot together, in order to see the apparition, but fortunately, perhaps, came away without accomplishing their desire, and the following description of the ghost is chiefly based on notes made by my grandmother at a later period.

The Eringle Truagh ghost appears in two guises. It adopts, when it appears to girls, the form of a very handsome young man, and when it appears to youths, the form of a very beautiful girl.

It is, perhaps, even more exclusive than the Banshee, for it only manifests to those who are members of a family that has lived in the neighbourhood of Truagh for many generations.

In former days, when the churchyard was used as a cemetery, the ghost, either in the guise of a young man or girl, often appeared on the occasion of a burial to the last person who lingered near the newly-made grave, and would so bewitch them that they

[1] The old church itself, of which only two ivy-coloured gables now remain, was demolished in 1830 (approx.).

[2] It was upon this David Roche that the baronetcy was conferred.

became desperately enamoured, and before parting would always promise to meet their charmer again in the same spot, exactly a month hence, sealing their promise with a kiss, known as the " Death Kiss of Truagh." The instant the kiss was given, however, the phantom (in the form of a young man or girl, as the case might be) disappeared, and its unfortunate victim realized that the beautiful being whose lips he (supposing the victim to be a man) had just touched with his own was no human creature at all, but the much dreaded and pitiless churchyard ghost. Mad, then, with despair, he would rush headlong to the village priest to solicit the aid of the Church, but neither prayers nor practice of exorcism was ever known to avert the catastrophe, and always upon the very day and at the very hour of the arranged meeting the phantom's victim died.

I paid a fleeting visit to the old churchyard, one evening when I was still in my teens ; and standing there, alone, with the waning daylight imparting a ghostly glimmer to the mouldering tombstones, I thought I had never seen a more eerie spot or breathed an atmosphere more strongly suggestive of the Unknown. The air was full of a concentrated sadness and despair that seemed to extend infinitely beyond life, for all time. I could feel eyes watching me and presences approaching me to peer into my face ; and intuition told me that they had all, in their lifetime, fallen victims to the fatal kiss, and that what was left of their earthly bodies lay buried in the soil around me. I am thankful to say that the fateful ghost did not appear to me, but I left the spot convinced that not only one but many denizens from the Unknown had clustered round me there.

And now to leave Ireland for awhile and refer to Clifton, where I was at school for some years. On the Durdham Downs, not far from the Sea Walls, is a narrow pathway leading, in a gradual descent, to the river Avon. In my early school days this pathway, which was known as the Gully, bore an extremely sinister reputation. And no wonder, for its history was grim enough. One evening, in the fifties of last century, a little girl, Melinda Payne, was sent by her parents, who lived in a cottage at the foot of the Gully, to the Cook's Folly Tavern, about three-quarters of a mile away, to buy some beer.

As the hours passed by and she did not return, her family grew anxious, and eventually, accompanied by friends and neighbours, set out in a body to look for her. They thoroughly searched the Downs between the Gully and Cook's Folly, but without success, and were coming to the conclusion that the unfortunate child must have fallen over the cliffs, when one of Melinda's brothers suddenly cried out :

" Oh, father, I believe I can see our Linda."

He pointed, as he spoke, to a heap of sticks and stones lying on one side of the pathway near the foot of the Gully, and when the searchers quickly approaching the heap flashed their lanterns on it, they saw projecting from beneath the piled up rubbish a little human hand. It was then, only too obvious, that Melinda Payne had been barbarously murdered. The crime was never brought home to anyone, though several people, at the time, were suspected, and the Gully, for years afterwards, was said to be haunted. All sorts of uncanny phenomena, it was rumoured, took place there. Some declared that when passing through the Gully late at night,

they heard wild, unearthly cries proceeding from it, while others testified to seeing gruesome lights and the shadowy figure of a white-faced child, which could be none other, they said, than the ghost of Melinda Payne. That there was much exaggeration in these stories I do not doubt, but I am quite sure that underlying them all was a substratum of truth.

Some forty and odd years ago, when I first remembered Durdham Downs, it was in a much wilder and more natural state than it is now. There were few roads across it, and the ground was still covered in places with gorse and a variety of wild flowers. There was, of course, no golf there then, and although preparatory and other schools played their games on the Downs in the daytime, one met very few people there, saving, perhaps, on Saturdays, late in the evening. The Gully itself was nearly always deserted, and viewed in the dusk, after sunset, no very great development of what is now termed the psychic faculty nor stretch of the imagination was required to conceive that it might be, as it probably was, a chosen rendezvous of ghosts.

It used to be a regular thing at my school, and I believe at other preparatory schools in the neighbourhood, for the fellows to dare one another to venture in the Gully alone, even in the afternoon.

On one occasion I was rash enough to accept the challenge, and never shall I forget my sensations, when having left my companions seated comfortably on the Downs, in full view of a school playing cricket, I commenced my descent of the narrow, tortuous path leading to the river. Braced up, however, by my love of adventure, I made up my mind to con-

tinue, and having at length gone as far as I had said I would, I was about to retrace my steps, when I suddenly saw through the foliage on one side of me, a sight that gave me a decided thrill. A man, a tall, wretchedly clad man with a bloodless face and a wild look in his eyes, stood there sharpening a knife. Even now, after all these years, I can hear the noise that knife made as it scraped the stone ; I was convinced that it was being sharpened to plunge into me, and my terror was so great that I scarcely dared breathe, whilst my knees shook to such an extent that I could hardly stand.

I opened my mouth several times to shout to my companions and bid them come to my aid, but my voice died away in my throat, and I could not articulate a sound. Neither could I stir, and this state of helplessness continued till a sudden movement on the part of the man broke the spell. With a wild yell of terror I fled up the path. Oh, the agony of that flight ! My feet seemed weighed down with lead and my lungs bursting ; but I managed somehow to struggle on, till I came within sight of my schoolfellows, when I tripped over a stone and fell.

Having struck my forehead with considerable force upon the ground, I was partially stunned, and in this state picked up by an old gentleman who happened to be passing at the time. He questioned me kindly as to why I had been in such haste, and when I told him my story, he advised me never to venture in the Gully again. "I am not warning you against ghosts," he said, "because there are no such things, but there are evilly-disposed men, and the Gully seems to attract them. You had better

walk back to your school with me, and if we meet a policeman on the way, we will tell him."

My companions now joining us, we walked back to Clifton in a body; and upon meeting a policeman in Worcester Terrace, where my school was, the old gentleman, true to his word, stopped him and told him all about my adventure.

Chancing to meet this same policeman in the street, two or three days later, I asked him if he had been to the Gully and seen the man with the knife, and he told me that he had not, because it was not on his beat, but that the policeman who patrolled the Downs had been there, and had seen no one.

"Perhaps," he went on, jokingly, "it was a ghost you saw. They do say as 'ow the Gully's 'aunted."

"Do they?" I said. "Why, that old gentleman who was so decent to me the other day says there are no such things as ghosts. Who was he?"

"What, didn't yer know?" the policeman replied. "He were old Mr. Matthews, all the boys in this 'ere neighbourhood calls 'im Maddy Matthews, because 'ee gets annoyed if they honly looks at 'im. 'Ee 'ates children, and I was not 'arf surprised, I can tell yer, when I seed 'im walking along with you."

Some little time after the above dialogue had taken place, I met "Maddy Matthews" in Clifton. Apparently, he had quite forgotten me, for, as I approached him, he aimed a vicious blow at me with his stick (he did this to every boy he met), and without evincing the slightest sign of recognition, passed on.

He was a well-known character in the town, I afterwards learned, but he rarely spoke to anyone,

and always went about alone, often muttering to himself and generally scowling at all the younger members of the male sex.

To ladies, he was, I believe, quite different. Anyhow, falling in love with a lady whom I knew well, who was neither rich, nor particularly good-looking, he made her an offer of marriage, and although well over sixty at the time, was so infatuated with her that he followed her about like a shadow, and would wait outside her house for hours at a time merely to catch a glimpse of her. It seems she refused to marry him ; and doing so with a scorn and an indignation that were apparently quite unjustifiable, told him to his face that she "would rather marry the devil." Strange to say, however, in spite of continuous rebuffs, the ardour of his passion never cooled, and he kept on proposing to her, periodically, up to the day of his death.

Also, much to the surprise of everyone, for he was generally thought to be poor, he left a very considerable fortune, which went, I believe, to his nephew, the eminent Queen's Counsel,[1] who afterwards became the Home Secretary of England.

[1] Henry Matthews, Q.C., M.P., Home Secretary 1886–92. Created Lord Llandaff, 1895.

CHAPTER VI

I UNDERGO THE SENSATIONS OF STRANGULATION AND DO A DAY'S FISHING ON A HAUNTED ISLAND

After leaving the preparatory school in Clifton, I went on to the College, and stayed there rather over five years. I then went for awhile as a pupil on a farm in Scotland, after which I spent two years with an army crammer in Clifton, and then read for an Inspectorship in the Royal Irish Constabulary, at the Queen's Service Academy, Dublin. It was while I was thus occupied, residing in rooms in Upper Leeson Street, that I had my first experience of what I may, perhaps, justly term a dangerous ghost.

I had retired one night, somewhat earlier than usual, for I was very tired, and had just got into bed, when I heard a slight noise coming, apparently, from one of the window recesses, and glancing quickly in that direction, I saw something stir. I had, of course, extinguished my candle, but the moonbeams filtering in between the folds of the thick plush curtains that hung across the windows illuminated the room sufficiently for me to see, though not very distinctly, any large object in it. And now, as I stared in wonder, and, I admit, not a little fear, I perceived something rise from the floor and advance towards me. In the dim uncertain

light it appeared too vague and indefinite for me to describe accurately ; I can only say that it gave me the impression of being something fearfully sinister and horrible, something only partly human in form, and wholly antagonistic and evil. Also, it advanced so quickly, that before I had time to move or utter a sound it was gripping me mercilessly by the throat with its long, clammy fingers, and pressing me backwards, down, down, down, until my head finally touched the pillow. I gasped, choked and suffered the most excruciating sensations of strangulation, but there was no relaxation. The pressure from those infernal fingers continued, without remission, till I eventually lost consciousness.

On coming to, after what seemed to my tortured senses an eternity, I found myself alone. The thing, whatever it was, had gone. Still, I was far too terrified to move, and it was not until many hours had passed that I ventured to raise my head and look around. As the dawn had broken, and it was quite light, I could see that I was now alone in the room (for there was no place in it in which anyone could remain concealed), and just to satisfy myself that no one could have got in from outside, I got up and examined the door and windows. The former was locked on the inside, just as I remembered leaving it before getting into bed, and the windows were bolted. Fully convinced, therefore, that my assailant hailed from the Unknown, I got back into bed, and, until I was eventually called, lay there in fear and trembling, lest something further of a ghostly nature should occur. My landlady raised no objections when I asked to be moved into another room, and after much persistent questioning on my part

admitted that the house, and particularly the apartment I had occupied, was haunted. She told me that the house had once been a private home for mentally afflicted people, and that, according to rumour, someone, either one of the patients or a nurse—she did not know which—had died under extremely tragic circumstances in the room I was about to vacate. This statement, which I believe to be, in all probability, true, would, of course, explain the above unpleasant experience, and also the fact that, although I was exempt from any further molestations on the part of any unearthly assailant in the room that was afterwards allotted to me, I, nevertheless, did not sleep at all well in it. My dreams were terrifying, and I kept awakening from them with a start and the alarming sensation that I was no longer alone. Yet I neither saw nor actually felt anything. However, after experiencing the decidedly unpleasant sensation I have alluded to for a few nights, I gave up my quarters in the house that had once harboured mental defectives and took rooms in Lower Merrion Street.

I have since found with regard to haunted houses, that in the majority of cases in which the sensation of being strangled forms one of the phenomena, the house so disturbed has been at one time closely associated with a mentally afflicted person with homicidal tendencies, and this discovery has led me to believe that the spirits of homicidally inclined lunatics remain earthbound for at least some time after physical dissolution. My next experience with the superphysical occurred in a cottage on the Wicklow Hills, near the junction of four cross roads.

Hearing that this locality was reputed to be fairy-haunted, I took a room in the cottage [1] for the purpose of holding a series of nocturnal vigils at the cross roads. On my arrival, feeling somewhat tired after a long cycle ride, I decided to hold my first vigil the following night, and retired to bed early. The night was so beautiful, however, that, before undressing, I leaned out of the window of my room and drew in deep breaths of the clover-scented air. The view was compelling. Before me, gleaming ghostly white in the moonlight, lay the cross roads, all silent and deserted, and there was a certain weirdness in this scene that fascinated me to such an extent that it required an effort on my part to tear myself away from it; but I eventually did so, and having got into bed, was soon sound asleep. I awoke with violent palpitations of the heart. No slightest sound was heard in the deathly stillness that surrounded me, and I was pondering over this and comparing the silence of the hills with that of the great city I had just left, when I suddenly caught the sound of footsteps in the far distance. It was some one running, running with long, even strides, and, as the sounds drew near, I became aware of a something about them that was both unusual and disconcerting. On they came, sharp and well defined; nearer and nearer still, until they were quite close to the cottage. Then a dog in the yard at the back of the premises set up a most unearthly howling; and I heard the wife of the owner of the cottage—the man and his wife occupied a room close to mine—say, "John, do you hear the dog?"

[1] I understand the cottage has long since been demolished, presumably on account of the hauntings.

"I should be deaf and no mistake if I didn't," John replied peevishly. "What's bothering him?"

"You may well ask that," the woman retorted. "Listen!" And as she spoke, I could hear the footsteps crunching their way up the gravel path to the front door. There they stopped. It then struck me, more forcibly even than before, that there was something peculiar about them, something that rendered them different from any other footsteps I had ever heard; but what exactly that something was I could not for the life of me say.

"John," the woman below suddenly began again. "John, I don't like those footsteps. Who and what can they be? It's the first time I've heard anyone running along the road, past the cross roads too, at this hour. And what can they be doing in the garden. Do get up and make sure the front door is locked."

She had hardly spoken before there came a loud knock, to be speedily followed by a second, and then, after a brief interval, a third.

I heard John get up, shuffle his way to the front door, and enquire who was there in rather a tremulous voice. But I did not hear any reply. Curiosity prompting me, I got out of bed and going to the window, which almost overlooked the front door, peered out. To my astonishment, however, no one was there.

In front of me lay the fields and cross roads, with the gently sloping hills beyond, all sleeping peacefully in the brilliant moonlight, but of a person knocking at the door there was not a sign. And yet I had heard no one go away. In the morning, after I had finished my breakfast, the woman of the house

asked if I intended staying any longer, and when I said I did not, that I had meant to remain several days, but had now decided to leave that afternoon, she evinced an unmistakable relief.

"Did you hear anything in the night?" she enquired.

"Only someone knocking at the front door," I replied. "There was nothing the matter, I hope?"

"Why, no," she said, with a queer expression in her eyes. "Nothing the matter exactly, but my husband and I didn't like what we heard in the night at all. We have never heard footsteps like those before, and we believe they came for you. I should have been obliged to ask you to go, if it hadn't been that you have said you will go yourself." And she fingered the edge of the tablecloth nervously as she spoke.

"I don't understand," I said. "Who was it that knocked and what makes you think they had any business with me?"

"It wasn't anybody," she replied, "because when I looked out of the window no one was there. It was a spirit, sir," here she crossed herself solemnly, "and it has something to do with you."

Perceiving then that she was no ignoramus, I told her about my experience with the strangling ghost in Leeson Street, and she expressed the opinion that it was this ghost that had followed me to the cottage.

"In County Galway, where I come from," she said, "they believe that ghosts sometimes attach themselves to people and follow them about. I only hope and trust this one will never do you any harm and that you will speedily get rid of it."

I asked her if she believed in exorcism, and she

said, " Not always ; it entirely depends on the kind of spirit you are dealing with." She went on to tell me of a terrible phantasm, in appearance half-human and half-animal, that, in defiance of innumerable attempts on the part of the clergy and others to lay it, still haunted a well-known castle[1] in King's County, in which friends of hers had once lived for some months as caretakers.

Well, I left the cottage that afternoon; even if the woman had been willing for me to stay, nothing would have induced me to do so, for whether she was right in her theory about the footsteps or not, I could not endure the thought of another night near those cross roads. I had felt that there was something about them, as they lay all gleaming white in the ghostly moonbeams, something in their stillness and utter isolation, something in the black shadows that, seeming to originate from nowhere, fringed their borders, something in all this, and in more than all this, which the instinct within me did not associate with fairies, but with some entity or entities infinitely alarming and grotesque. Hence, it was with some regret, perhaps, but far greater relief, that I mounted my bicycle and rode away. I have never visited the cottage since.

A haunting that is said[2] to be in some way connected with the O'Donnells, though in what way I have never been able to ascertain, is the haunting at Mundrehid, a small town of ancient origin in Queen's County. It is supposed that in early times Mundrehid was a Druidical settlement. Later on, however,

[1] The castle was, I believe, burned down during the troubles in 1916. The haunting was one of the best-corroborated in the British Isles.

[2] According to the late Lady Griffin, *née* Glory O'Donnell.

perhaps about the sixth century, when Ireland was, for the most part, converted to Christianity, St. Laisren is credited with having built a church there. This church, with the cemetery surrounding it, was, I believe, still in fairly good preservation at the beginning of the last century; but when I was reading for the R.I.C. in Dublin, nothing remained of the church but the merest semblance of ruins, while the cemetery was almost indistinguishable from the surrounding fields, most of the old tombstones having been removed and made to serve a variety of purposes. According to local belief, the place is cursed, a curse having been once put upon it, and among the phantoms said to be seen there periodically is that of a Druid, who invariably appears, accompanied by a loud rumbling sound like thunder, and a diabolical looking black man, who after running, with an evil smile on his face, three times round the site of the old cemetery sinks with alarming abruptness into the ground. Having heard these stories about Mundrehid, practically all my life, I intended to go there and to hold a nocturnal vigil on the ruins of the old church. Fate, however, was against me, and though I made several attempts to get to the place, I was always prevented by some unexpected happening.

Once I had actually started, but being taken suddenly ill, was forced to turn back; while, on another occasion, I was about to start, when I was prevented by the sudden death of a friend.

Close to Mundrehid, by the way, is the village of Gortavoragh, that was said, when I was in Dublin, to be haunted by a coach driven by a headless coachman and drawn by headless horses, a ghostly

phenomenon exactly similar to the one I have described as haunting the Vizes.

I was still at Queen's Service Academy, when I heard that a strange story was in circulation in Dublin relating to a ghost being seen on Carlisle Bridge.

As far as I recollect, the story was as follows: The second Earl of Llandaff,[1] though a married man, carried on a clandestine intercourse with the sister of a Tipperary solicitor, which terminated in her having to leave home in disgrace. The Earl, learning of this and anxious to do all he could to assist her, made enquiries as to where she had gone, and discovering at last that she was in Dublin, he at once set off to that city in order to find her. After searching in vain for some time, he was about to give up his quest in despair, when he caught sight of her one day on Carlisle Bridge. She was coming towards him, but the expression on her face plainly showed that she did not see him, and although he wanted to speak to her, something seemed to prevent him, and she passed him by, apparently quite unconscious of his proximity. Feeling strangely upset, though he did not know why, he followed Miss B—— across the bridge and right on till she stopped at a house hear the Rotunda Hospital.

He then tried again to speak to her, but again something prevented him, and, as he could not stop her, she entered the house. It was some minutes before he could sufficiently pull himself together, but eventually he knocked at the door and asked the servant who answered it if he could see Miss B——.

[1] Francis James Mathew. On his death, sometime in the thirties of last century, the title became extinct.

"I'm afraid you can't, sir," the servant replied, looking distinctly solemn.

"But why?" Lord Llandaff stammered. "I saw her just now in the street and she came in just before I knocked."

"That is impossible, sir," the servant replied. "Miss B—— has been ill for some time and died early this morning."

This strange experience, when it became known, created an immense sensation in Dublin society, and it was recalled, and again talked about, when I was at the Queen's Service Academy by an experience that befel one of my fellow-students. As he lived on the other side of the river, he had to cross the bridge on his way to and from Crawley's, and he told us that as he was crossing the bridge on three consecutive afternoons, at exactly the same time, a young woman passed him by, whose quaint attire made him study her very closely. She was wearing a kind of crinoline skirt and tight-fitting bodice, and a Leghorn hat, with a high crown and wide drooping brim, the style of dress in vogue some sixty years previously. On meeting her the third time, he was so impressed that he followed her to the commencement of Great Butain Street, where he suddenly and, as it seemed to him, quite inexplicably, lost sight of her. To use his own words, "She was there one moment and gone the next," and the whole thing seemed so remarkable that he not only mentioned it to us, his fellow-students, but spoke about it outside the Academy, so that for a while it was a general theme of conversation.

Another story that went the round of the best social circles in Dublin in my time related to

Lieut.-General Sir Charles Routledge O'Donnell, my father's cousin.[1] Sir Charles, who, in addition to being a soldier of distinction, was also a member of the Irish Academy, was entering the headquarters of the latter one morning, when one of the officials, looking at him in an enquiring manner, asked, "Can I do anything for you, sir? Have you left anything behind?"

"What do you mean by have I left anything behind?" Sir Charles asked, in the peremptory tones characteristic of him. "I have only just come."

"But, sir," the man responded, "you only left the building a few minutes ago, and I remarked to my pal that you weren't looking very well."

"What the —— do you mean?" Sir Charles cried angrily. "I am perfectly well, I tell you, and this is the first time I have been here to-day!" And he passed on, leaving the official scratching his head, and wondering, no doubt, whether it was he or his patron that had taken leave of his senses. It may, of course, be argued, that this was a case of mistaken identity, but the fact that Sir Charles' appearance was decidedly striking makes it extremely unlikely that anyone else could have been mistaken for him. My uncle, Colonel John Vize O'Donnell, whom I visited, whilst I was at Crawley's, used to tell the story, and I also heard it, with slight variations, from quite a number of people.

A similar case of projection, but one of a rather more harrowing nature, is that told me by a lady

[1] Son of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Anderson O'Donnell, by his wife, the Princess Domina Jan, niece of the Shah of Persia. He was Colonel of the 18th Hussars and secretary to the Commander-in-chief of the Forces in Canada. He married a daughter of General James Patrick Murray, C.B., cousin to Baron Elibank.

whom I once met in London, concerning Dr. Nelligan, a well-known cleric in Dublin, whose church I attended (those were days when all self-respecting youth attended church), and whose sermons thrilled me as they did everyone else. Well, the lady I met had once lived, like myself, in Dublin. There she had regularly attended Dr. Nellingan's church, and obviously held the preacher in great veneration and esteem. One day, when out walking near her home, in Hampstead, she saw to her astonishment, but intense delight, a gentleman in clerical attire, whom she instantly recognized as Dr. Nelligan, smiling at her from the opposite side of the road and standing on the kerbstone, as if about to cross over and speak to her. She then, in some curious way she could not explain, suddenly lost sight of him ; and a few days later she learned that he had died at his home in Ireland, on the day that she had seen him, or rather his ghost, in Hampstead.

I suggested to her that she might only have seen someone very like Dr. Nelligan, perhaps a relative. Or had she, perhaps, known that he was ill, and been thinking of him ? In the latter case she might have imagined she had seen him. But to both these suggestions she gave a most emphatic denial, declaring that she had not known that he was ill, and that directly she could no longer see him, intuition told her that what she had seen was his ghost. What apparently surprised her most was that Dr. Nelligan's phantom should have appeared to her at all, since she had only been slightly acquainted with him ; but, as I pointed out to her, spirits often do appear to those who have been

either complete or comparative strangers to them during life, and that therefore there was nothing very unusual in her experience.

I will conclude this chapter with one of my own experiences, one that occurred in Ireland shortly before I left the Queen's Service Academy.

I was very fond of fishing in those days—I have since come to regard that so-called sport as indefensibly cruel and have consequently given it up—and often spent Saturday fishing either at Dalkey or some neighbouring spot. Well, on the occasion of one of these fishing expeditions, I engaged a boatman to row me to the Mugglestone rocks, which lie a little beyond Dalkey, and on arriving there told him to row back to shore and come for me again at six o'clock in the evening. It was about eleven o'clock when I first threw in my line, and all the time I fished that day I had the curious sensation that someone was standing at my elbow watching me. I could feel that eyes were following my every movement, yet, when I turned round, which I did several times involuntarily, no one was there.

The island, I must add, consisting merely of bare rock, afforded no cover of any kind, so that had anyone been on it, I should most certainly have seen him.

Now, as a rule, I had no cause to complain of poor sport. But I could catch nothing that day, and I was rather glad than otherwise when the boatman turned up at four o'clock to row me back. I asked him, of course, why he had come two hours before his time, and he replied, most indignantly, "Well, that's a queer question to ask! I came because you signalled to me to come."

"But I did no such thing," I exclaimed. "Where were you?"

"Why, I was rowing about," he said, "some little distance off, and happening to look in the direction of the Island, I distinctly saw you wave your handkerchief at me, which meant, of course, that you wanted me to come—and all I can say is that if you didn't stand up and wave a handkerchief, then the ghost did."

Now this very matter-of-fact allusion to a ghost struck me as being distinctly comical, and I laughed outright. Consequently, it was some time before I could persuade my would-be rescuer to say another word. However, he got over his annoyance after a time, and explained to me that some years previously the body of a drowned sailor had been washed up on the Island, and that a figure, believed to be his ghost, had frequently been seen there since.

"Have you caught anything?" he suddenly asked; and on my reply in the negative, he immediately cried out, "I thought so! When the ghost's about, no one ever does."

CHAPTER VII

DREAMS

All through the early period of my life, that is to say, from childhood until I was thirty, I was subject, as I daresay a good many other people are, not only to peculiarly vivid dreams, but to repetitionary dreams. One such dream came to me annually for a space of five years, every first week in July. It was this :

I dreamed I was bicycling in the country, along a white, dusty road, and down a somewhat steep incline. The road was skirted on either side by a low stone wall, beyond which lay long stretches of poor pasture land, that eventually terminated in barren, gloomy hills. It was a doleful landscape, and I felt depressed in consequence. Presently, as I drew near a turning, I heard the sound of wheels, and an open carriage drawn by a pair of black horses dashed across the road in front of me, so abruptly and in such close proximity to me, that I only escaped running into it by swerving to one side, and consequently crashing into the wall instead. For some seconds I was partially stunned, and on coming to found myself lying on the ground with my machine, which was broken in half, by my side. At this juncture I invariably awoke. This dream kept on occurring, as I have said, with extraordinary regularity for five years. Then came the sequel.

For a brief interim after leaving school I was a pupil on a farm near Montrose. My host was what is politely styled a gentleman farmer, and he had a large and somewhat boisterous family. Well, early one morning in the first week of July, I set out with them on an excursion to some picturesque ruins about a dozen miles away. They, the farmer and his family, riding in a wagonette, and I accompanying them on a safety bicycle.

When we had gone some distance, however, my machine got punctured, and I was left behind to repair it, the farmer telling me to follow on and giving me careful instructions as regards the road I was to take, as I had never been that way before. The puncture mended, I was going full tilt down a steepish hill, hoping to overtake the wagonette, when I suddenly became aware that I was quite familiar with my surroundings. Then, I remembered my annual dream and realized that the scene in front of me was actually the scene of this dream. There, in front of me, was the white, dusty road, with a low stone wall on either side of it; here, on the offside of these walls, the bare undulating pasture land and beyond, away in the distance, the gloomy hills. It was the exact material counterpart of what I had seen so vividly in my sleep. I was still experiencing the shock of surprise, when, on my coming to a turning, an open carriage drawn by a pair of black horses dashed across the road in front of me, and as I could not stop, I was forced either to collide with the carriage or swerve aside into the wall. I chose the latter. I swerved aside and, crashing into the wall, was rendered unconscious. On coming to, I found myself lying in the road, and

by my side, broken in two, just as I had seen it in my dreams, was my machine. There was no one about. The occupant or occupants of the carriage that had caused my accident had driven on, leaving me lying on the road, for all they knew to the contrary, to die. I had, therefore, no option but to gather up the wheels of my bicycle and trundle them wearily along to the nearest town. Now, what were these "dreams"? What could they have been? Were they merely very vivid fancies, and was the fulfilment of them simply coincidence? Or did they owe their origin to superphysical sources?

As I had never been in Scotland up to that date, and as the type of scenery was different from any I had ever encountered, it was difficult to conceive how the dreams could have originated in any experience of my waking hours. Besides, there was the incident of the carriage and the broken bicycle. I had never had an accident of that description, neither had I ever witnessed one, nor, as far as I could remember, had I ever thought of one. Indeed, I had never ridden a bicycle till I went to Scotland. Hence, the idea that came to me in my dreams could scarcely have been prompted by anything in any way associated with me in my wakeful hours. In other words, the explanation was not to be found in the natural, and, consequently, it could only lie in the superphysical. For some utterly inscrutable reason there would seem to have been a desire on the part of the Unknown, perhaps on the part of some particular entity appertaining to the Unknown, to warn me repeatedly of an incident that would one day happen to me. I have often wondered since whether, had I not had those dreams,

I should have chosen to collide with the carriage instead of the wall, and so have incurred a possibly fatal accident. As the following incident will show, however, repetitionary dreams are not always productive of fortunate results.

Once, when staying in New York, I became acquainted with an Austrian engineer named Schneider, who told certain of his friends, including myself, that he was constantly having a curious dream.

"I find myself standing on the pavement of a street," he said, "in front of a restaurant. I have a journey to make, and want to charter a four-wheeler, but am undecided as to which of the two that present themselves I should take. The one is driven by an old man in a white chimney-pot hat, the other by quite a young man in a black Trilby. However, in the end I hail and get into one of them, on awakening I can never remember which, and soon after I have got into it a collision occurs, and I am badly injured."

Well, a year or so after I had met Schneider, I ran into one of the men to whom he had told his dream, a man named Bliss, in Southampton. He had just landed from New York.

"Do you remember that fellow Schneider?" he asked as we sat down to lunch together in a restaurant in High Street. "A curious thing happened this April. I met him one day near Broadway, just outside the restaurant where I had been lunching.

"'I say,' he exclaimed, 'I want to have a chat with you about something in your line. I am in a bit of a hurry, as I have to get to a friend's house in twenty minutes. Which way are you doing?' I told him. 'Oh, that's all right,' he answered, 'I'm

going past there, and if you come in my four-wheeler I'll put you down. We can have a chat on the way.'

"He was going to add more when he stopped short and gave a little gasp of astonishment. 'Gee, but that's odd,' he exclaimed. 'See, there are the two four-wheelers of those dreams I told you about,' and he pointed to two cabs in the road facing us. One was drawn by a red-faced old man in a white top hat and the other by a dissipated, rakish-looking youth in a black Trilby. 'They are exactly as I have seen them in my sleep. There's the restaurant,' and he pointed to the place I had just left. 'I wish to God I could remember which it was I took, but there, it's no use trying; I can't. You're not superstitious, are you?' I told him I wasn't. 'That's all right then,' he went on. 'I reckon we'll take our chance. After all, they were only dreams.' We got into the cab drawn by the old man, and we hadn't gone far before we discovered, by the way he was driving, that he was hopelessly drunk, and we were about to put our heads out of the windows and bid him stop, when there was a tremendous smash and I found myself in the gutter. How I got there I don't know, but we had driven right into an electric tram. One of the horses was killed outright and Schneider was so badly hurt he died that evening. I was with him just before the end. He was then conscious and recognized me. 'We both took the wrong cab after all, Bliss,' he said. 'Just as I did in my dreams.'"

Turning this story over in my mind, it has occurred to me that what are often taken to be

merely very vivid dreams may be, in reality, the real experiences of a projected ego; that is to say, it may be that during what we term sleep the sleeper's immaterial ego detaches itself from his material body and wanders abroad, sometimes whithersoever it wills, and sometimes, more often than not, I imagine, under the controlling influence of some superphysical force or forces. When this projection of the sleeper's immaterial ego occurs, the consequent dream, which is really no dream but an actual experience, is naturally extraordinarily vivid. Everyone, of course, has heard the story, always related by someone to whom it was told first hand, of the lady who dreamed so continually of being in a certain old-world country house that she eventually got to know its interior by heart. Then came the sequel. She went on a visit to some friends of hers, living in the country, a part to which she had never been before, and one day set out with them to call on some friends of theirs to whom she was a stranger. On their arrival at the house, an old country mansion, standing in several acres of gound, the door was opened by a maid-servant, who, directly she saw the stranger, shrieked, "The ghost! the ghost!" and all but fainted with fright. The astounded visitors were then informed by the people they had come to see, and who now appeared upon the scene, that for sometime past the house had been constantly haunted by the phantom of a lady, and that the phantasm was, indeed, the exact counterpart of the lady, the stranger to them, who had just arrived. The latter, immensely interested, asked if she might see over the house, and upon the owners showing her round she identified the whole of it, even down

to the smallest detail. It was the very house she had visited so often in her sleep.

Those who narrate this story invariably explain it on the grounds of projection, and I do not doubt that they are right. There are, I believe, quite as many hauntings by phantasms of the living, in other words, projections, as there are hauntings by phantasms of the dead.

I think one of the most curious cases of the kind was narrated a year or two ago at the annual Christmas dinner given by the Irish Circle of the Lyceum Club. It was to this effect. A certain man in a lonely house in the West of Ireland was constantly haunted by the phantasm of a little boy that used to be seen running round an antique bed. One day, a stranger called at the house and asked if he might be allowed to go over it. "I lived here when I was a child," he explained, "and the place has a great fascination for me." Permission granted, he was conducted over the house, and on coming to the haunted room he exclaimed, "This used to be my room. My bed stood where that one is standing, and was very like it, by the way, and I frequently dream I am running round it, just as I did when a boy." Struck with the strangeness of it all, the owner of the house told him of the haunting, and asked him if he had a photograph of himself as a boy. He promised to send one as soon as he returned home. He kept his word, and when the photograph came, it was seen to be the exact counterpart of the ghost. This story was vouched for as true and it raises a very interesting question. Granted that projection can at times take place, does the form that projection assumes depend on the

thought of the projector? One would deduce from the above case that it does.

The sleeper thought of himself as a boy, and it was in the guise of a boy that his projection, or phantasm, invariably appeared. Hence, one wonders, if, at the time of projection, he had been thinking of himself as a lion or tiger, his phantasm would have been seen in the guise of a lion or tiger. The extent to which the projection is influenced by the mind of the projector is a very interesting question. In the majority of the cases that I have come across the projection or phantasm projection would certainly seem to adopt an appearance in conformity with the projector's thoughts. Take, for example, the case of Dr. Wynn Westcott, the well-known coroner.[1] On Thursday, April 12th, 1888, Dr. Westcott made an appointment to meet two men at 10.45 the following morning in the reading-room of the British Museum. Next day, however, a sudden and severe cold obliged him to stay in bed. Yet, precisely at the time of his appointment, he was seen to pass the depository for sticks and umbrellas by one of the officials there. Immediately afterwards, two ladies, a Mrs. Salmon and a Miss O'Connell, saw him walking round the reading-room itself, as if seeking someone. The case is a thoroughly well-attested one, and should convince even the most hardened of sceptics. Dr. Westcott, at the time his phantasm appeared, was doubtless thinking very intently of the appointment he was unable to keep, and from this it would seem that projection depends, to a very large extent, on concentration. I think, other

[1] *Vide* "Twenty Years of Psychical Research," by Ed. T. Bennett. Published 1904.

factors come into play, factors which are, at present, unknown to us. In the case of Dr. Wynn Westcott, there are two points of peculiar interest. In the first place, his phantasm did not appear in night attire, as one might have expected, since its material counterpart was in bed at the time, but fully dressed in out-of-door clothes. This, of course, would suggest that the phantasm that is projected does not appear in the actual contemporaneous guise of the projector, but in the guise in which the projector is thinking of himself at the moment of projection. In other words, it is the mind of the projector at the moment when the immaterial body is separated from the material that actually fashions the appearance of the phantasm projected. The second point of interest in this case is that although at 10.45 a.m., on Friday, April 13th, 1888, the material ego of Dr. Wynn Westcott was in bed and thinking intently of his appointment at the reading-room of the British Museum, his astonishment, on being subsequently informed that he had been seen there at the aforesaid time, proves that he was in no way conscious of the projection that had taken place.

Now, are we to infer from this that projections or phantasms of the living are invariably without consciousness, and consequently mere shadows or reflections, or is it that they have consciousness and their not being cognisant of it is merely a matter of defective memory ?

Regarding dreams and memory, opinion is divided. There are some who believe that we do not always dream when we are asleep ; that the proper function of sleep is to suspend the activities of the brain as well as those of the body, and that when we dream,

sleep is more or less impaired according to the extent of our dreaming. Others maintain that we always dream, but not infrequently forget our dreams at the moment of awakening. The remembrance of them depends on whether our sleep has been deep or slight. In the same sleep, they argue, there may be varying degrees of intensity. In other words, the same sleep may be more intense during one period than during another ; therefore, some dreams during the same sleep will be remembered, whilst others are forgotten ; and with regard to those that are forgotten, it is precisely the same to the dreamer as if he had not dreamed at all. Indeed, there may be people who have slept so soundly all their lives that they do not remember ever having dreamed at all, and also people who have not remembered any dream till they have attained an advanced age. I myself believe we always dream when asleep, and sometimes remember and sometimes forget our dreams when we wake ; because, if we do not always dream, how is the beginning of our dreams accounted for ? On the supposition of those who affirm that we do not always dream when asleep, the mind, at a particular period of sleep, is void of ideas ; then an idea suddenly enters it and we begin to dream. Now this idea, according to the above theory, was not called into existence by any idea antecedent to it, because the mind was previously a blank. In what, then, could the idea have originated ? The consideration of this problem only confirms me in the opinion that we always dream, but do not always remember our dreams.

To return to the case of Dr. Wynn Westcott, it is quite likely that, just about 10.45 a.m. that Friday

morning he may have fallen asleep and while in that state have projected himself to the British Museum. Either he (that is to say his material ego) or his projection was conscious then of being there, but dreams following the reunion of the egos dimmed his memory, and on awakening he had completely forgotten his experience in the astral or spirit form. Something of this sort may, I repeat, quite conceivably have happened, and it would therefore be unsafe to conclude that the projection seen that morning in the British Museum lacked consciousness, merely because its material counterpart had no recollection of having been there.

When I was in the States, I read, quite by chance one day, the account of a murder trial in South America. I made very careful notes of it at the time, but as I unfortunately lost these in my wanderings, I can only refer to the matter very briefly. A man called Diego or some such name was put on trial for murdering an old woman. Two witnesses swore they had seen him coming out of the door of her house shortly before the murder was discovered. Diego denied that he had been anywhere near her house that night, and produced an alibi, a near relative of his, corroborating his statement that at the time the crime was committed Diego was at home in bed. The alibi was discredited, and Diego, being found guilty, was executed. However, to me the chief point of interest in the case was a statement made by Diego during the trial. He said that on the night of the murder he dreamed most vividly that he had seen the old woman lying dead on the floor and the assassin in the act of getting out of a window

overlooking the back premises. On being questioned as to the appearance of the assassin, he said he could not see him very distinctly because a kind of mist or shadow obscured his face. This story was ridiculed and, as I have already stated, he was condemned to death. On reading the case at the time I was convinced of the possible truth of the evidence not only of Diego and his alibi, but also of the witnesses for the prosecution. What had actually occurred, I conceived, was this : On the night of the murder, Diego, at home and in bed, began dreaming about the victim of the tragedy, whom he knew intimately, and all the conditions being favourable, projection took place, his immaterial ego visiting the scene of the crime immediately after its committal. The two witnesses for the prosecution happening to pass the house at the time, saw what they very naturally took to be Diego leaving the premises, but in reality it was not Diego, that is to say, not his material body, but merely his phantasm or projection.

A study of the records of psychical phenomena will show that such a theory is by no means lacking in support. Indeed, I feel convinced that in this theory lies the true explanation of the conflicting evidence given at the trial of Diego, and that the latter was entirely innocent of the crime attributed to him.

CHAPTER VIII

DREAMS

I have met people who believe that there exists a kind of dreamland where dreamers are in the habit of meeting one another and forming dream friendships and acquaintances. Whether there is really such a place or not I do not of course know, but I can vouch for the following, which at least tends to prove that dreamers do, at times, meet. When I was a youth, I dreamed very vividly one night that I was walking along the promenade of some seaside resort. A few lights were burning, but all the same the place appeared to be absolutely deserted. Presently, I came to a shelter, and seeing something on the ground bent down to examine it. Rather to my surprise, it proved to be a red leather reticule, with a silver clasp that sparkled very brightly in the sickly flame of a neighbouring lamp. I was about to open it, to see if I could discover any clue as to its owner, when a young man came up to me and asked what was the matter. I showed him the reticule, and he said, " Well, that's strange, for I have just picked up a purse." I asked him if we had not better take them to the police station. He agreed, and we started off at once. Before we had gone many yards, however, we heard a great tumult and presently found ourselves in the midst of a dense throng of

people, one of whom, in answer to our enquiries, informed us that the Town Hall was on fire. Unable now to escape from the rapidly increasing crowd, we were carried forward by it, and in the bustle and confusion, I not only lost sight of my companion, but lost the reticule as well. I was looking for both when I abruptly awoke. It was a very vivid dream, and it impressed me to such a degree that I made a note of it in my diary. That was in 1893. In May, 1894, I was sitting on the sea-front at Weston-super-Mare, watching the passers-by, when a young man, whose face and general appearance seemed somehow familiar to me, suddenly sat down beside me.

We got into conversation, and presently, after gazing at me with rather disconcerting intensity for some moments, he remarked, "I don't know why, but you remind me in some curious manner of a very peculiar dream I once had of this esplanade."

"What was it?" I enquired, my curiosity aroused.

"Why, this," he said. "One night last year I dreamed I picked up a purse somewhere near here, and I was walking along with it in my hand, when I came upon a young man very like you, who had just found a lady's reticule. We got quite friendly, and were on our way to the police station with our findings, when we were suddenly overtaken by a crowd. I lost sight of my companion, and was trying to wrest the purse from a rough who had snatched it from me, when I awoke. I don't take much notice of my dreams as a rule, but this one interested me so much that I wrote it all down in a memorandum book."

Now as the dates of our respective dreams corresponded, I could only conclude that by the

strangest of coincidences we had projected ourselves simultaneously to the same place and there met. I am inclined to think, however, that my friend was mistaken in believing that place to have been Weston-super-Mare, because no fire had taken place in Weston-super-Mare on that particular date.

I have had many dreams, some of them repetitionary, in which I have suffered terribly from fear. One of these repetitionary dreams in particular I shall never forget. In it I am walking along a path that runs parallel with and close to a very high white stone wall, terminating abruptly in a sharp angle. The wall faces a dreary, barren stretch of country devoid of any human habitation, and as I walk on in the direction of the angle, I know instinctively that something is lurking there, and getting ready to spring out on me. I would give all I possess, even my soul, to turn tail and bolt, but I cannot. Some irresistible power forces me to go on. Oh, the agony I have gone through on nearing that angle, the horror and terror with which it has inspired me ! Always I get right up to the angle, see the shadow of the thing on the verge of bounding forward, and then—I awake. Awake in a sweat, and almost too terrified even to think. The heart and brain can, I believe, only stand a certain amount of terror ; there is a limit to the strain put on them, and if that limit is passed, something, either life or reason must snap. Had that lurking horror sprung, I believe that either my heart would have stopped or my brain have given way.

This dream, which I used to have constantly, would, perhaps, be termed by most people merely a nightmare, but to my mind its intense and vivid

realism suggests very strongly that it was no dream at all in the ordinarily accepted meaning of that word, but a case of projection. But perhaps it is no wonder that the kind of fear I have just depicted was what I was most apt to experience as a boy. I saw my first ghost, and a very terrifying one it was, when I was barely five, and I was constantly hearing the most bloodcurdling stories of hauntings and crimes. The chief culprit (I use that epithet, because any adult who tells a child horrors is, I think, deserving of it) was a Miss Millward, in all other respects praiseworthy—she had, by the way, once been in affluent circumstances, but was now very poor—whom my mother employed to do needlework. She was a native of Worcester, and many of her stories were about that town. For instance, the following. Her parents at one time rented a house in the neighbourhood of Friar Street that had long stood empty. For a week or so all went well. Then, one night, after the whole household had retired, one of the children suddenly began to cry, and Mr. Millward, hearing it, got up at once and ran into the nursery, where the younger children were sleeping, to see what was the matter. Minute after minute passed, but he did not return. Mrs. Millward at length grew uneasy, and slipping on her dressing-gown, went in search of him. It was a large house, and as she crossed the spacious landing a gust of wind through an open window blew out the light, leaving her in total darkness. She called to her husband. There was no reply, and with the exception of a kind of stifled wail from one of them, the children were quiet. Greatly alarmed now, she groped her way in the direction of the staircase and

was within a few feet of it, when a sudden burst of moonlight, illuminating the wide landing, revealed a strange sight. Mr. Millward was lying motionless on the stairs, and bending over him, a tall figure swathed from head to foot in black. As Mrs. Millward, paralysed with fright, stared at the figure, it slowly raised its head and revealed the grinning countenance of a skeleton. Without being able to utter a sound, Mrs. Millward fainted. What might have happened then one can only conjecture. What did happen was that a friend of the Millwards, who happened to be staying with them, being awakened by hearing an unusual noise on the landing overhead, went upstairs to ascertain the cause of it, and discovered the Millwards in a state of unconsciousness. There was no sign of the ghost anywhere.

On another occasion, Mrs. Millward was going upstairs, when she heard someone come racing up behind her. Thinking it was her husband, whom she had just seen go out, returning in a desperate hurry to fetch something he had forgotten, she moved aside to let him pass, and her astonishment knew no bounds when, instead of her husband, she saw a nude figure with a peak-shaped head. The thing, whatever it was, bounded past her and went leaping up the stairs two or three steps at a time. Mrs. Millward did not faint this time, but turning round ran helter-skelter out of the house to her nearest neighbours. It was some time before she could persuade any of them to return to the house with her, but, when at last some six or seven of them, armed with walking sticks and pokers, did venture to cross the threshold, the figure with the peak-

shaped head was nowhere to be found. Miss Millward told me many other stories of the hauntings her family experienced, but those I have narrated impressed me most, and I never ventured up the staircase in my old home after dusk without fully expecting either to find the black robed figure with a skeleton's face lying in wait for me, or to hear ghostly footsteps running up the stairs after me, evilly bent on overtaking me. The cupboard in my bedroom had a peculiar horror for me, too. I used to dream that I saw the door of it begin to open very slowly, and, as in the case of my wall dream, I instinctively knew some horrible and grotesque thing was in hiding there. Also, as in the case of my wall dream, sick with terror, I was momentarily expecting the horrible and grotesque thing would show itself, when I invariably awoke. This dream continued periodically till I was about twelve years of age, when it abruptly ceased, but the impression it made was so strong that for years afterwards I never went to bed in that room without first of all looking in the cupboard to assure myself that no one and nothing was actually in hiding there.

Creakings at night always inspired me with terror. In a house that I often visited in my juvenile days the creakings were most pronounced. I used to lie awake and listen to them. First of all, there would be creakings on the staircase outside my room, surreptitious creakings, as if someone were feeling his way stealthily down the stairs ; then the boards on the landing would creak, and then the furniture in my room, the creakings always seeming to get nearer and nearer to my bed until at last they were close beside it. I would then dive my

head under the bedclothes and lie there in a sweat, expecting every minute to find myself in the clutch of a ghost.

But ghosts and hauntings did not constitute the sole topic of Miss Millward's talks. She not infrequently curdled my young blood by telling me of murders, and with the unerring instinct of an artist invariably chose twilight as the most fitting time for such recitations. I can vividly recall sitting in my chair one evening by the glimmering fire, watching with apprehension the shades of night falling fast and shadows, dark and mysterious, creeping forth from various objects in the room, while Miss Millward narrated to me, with no lack of detail, the story of Kate Webster, who cut up and boiled her mistress, Miss Thomas, in a house in Park Road, Richmond, in 1879.

She assured me (not that I needed any assurance, for I was only too ready to believe her) that when staying with some friends at Twickenham, she had often seen Kate Webster, as the latter used to do occasional charing for the people next door.

"Her face," she said, "frightened me dreadfully. I didn't know anything about her then, of course, but whenever she looked at me, I felt as if nothing would give her greater pleasure than to wring my neck. If your mamma will let you come home with me one day," Miss Millward added, very mysteriously, "I will show you something that will interest you, something we treasure very much indeed." I do not remember how I obtained the necessary permission to accompany Miss Millward home. I suppose I did not state, and my mother did not guess the real reason of my somewhat unusual request.

Anyhow, home with Miss Millward I went, and I had not been in her parlour many minutes before, without any apparent reason, my attention was attracted to an armchair that seemed to stand out conspicuously from the rest of the furniture. No one sat in it while we had tea, but suddenly it creaked.

"There!" Miss Millward exclaimed. "Did you hear that, Master Elliott? That chair, which is the surprise I had in store for you, belonged to Miss Thomas and came out of the house where she was murdered. My Twickenham friends bought it at the sale of her effects. Now, whenever I hear that chair creak, I feel sure that either Kate Webster or Miss Thomas is sitting in it."

As it was getting dark and everything in the room had become indistinct in consequence, this remark of Miss Millward's had the effect of completely marring my appreciation of the good spread prepared for my benefit, and for the rest of my visit I endured an agony of fear. I sat with one eye on the chair, expecting to see I know not what emerge from its recesses; and as soon as politeness permitted, I took my departure.

Whether Miss Millward's (or rather Mrs. Thomas's) chair really was haunted, I cannot say, for I never went to Miss Millward's house again; but á propos of creaking chairs, I recall the following incident. A friend of mine, an Australian curio-hunter called Sickert, bought an old chair at a sale in Chelsea. He put it in his study, and every evening, almost as soon as he began to read, the chair began to creak. Now there was something so curious about these creaks, so different from any other creaks he had

ever heard, that they invariably riveted his attention and got on his nerves to such an extent that he could think of nothing else. Finally, he consulted a spiritualist, who told him the chair was haunted by a poor earthbound spirit that wanted to get into touch with him.

"Next time it creaks," the spiritualist said, "Say, 'well, friend, are you there? Is there anything I can do for you? Two creaks for yes and one for no.' Then, if it creaks twice, carry on with the alphabet, just as you would do at table turning." My friend dined out that evening and it was late ere he returned. The clock in the hall had stuck twelve, and he was still sitting by the fireside reading, when the chair suddenly gave a loud creak. Remembering the spiritualist's injunction, my friend called out, albeit in a somewhat hesitating and half-hearted fashion, "Well, friend, are you there?" whereupon, before he could proceed with his instructions, a deep hollow sounding voice immediately replied, "Yes, I'm here."

My friend, in less time than it takes to tell, was out of the room and the flat, too, and by eleven the following morning the chair was back in its old home in Chelsea.

Before concluding this chapter, I should like to refer briefly to its main theme, namely dreams, and with regard to them allude to one idiosyncrasy in particular. I have often found that at the very time that I have been dreaming of ghosts, one has actually been seen or heard by someone in the house. It must suffice here to mention only one or two of the many instances of this. In a house in St. Ives, Cornwall, I dreamed one night that a ghost, in the

form of a swarthy-visaged, old woman, with dark, gleaming eyes and a hard, grim mouth, was standing in the doorway looking at me. I at once associated her with stories I had heard of Mrs. ——, a former owner of the house, and was getting ready to jump out of bed, on the side furthest from the door, as she began to approach me, when I awoke. On coming down to breakfast in the morning I met my new housekeeper, an elderly Irishwoman. As soon as she saw me, she began to cross herself. "Why, Ellen," I said, "what are you doing that for?"

"Musha, Mary," she replied, "may the holy saints preserve me! The ghost of some old cratur came to me in the night, and it's not another day I'll be staying in this house. You never told me it was haunted." I tried to persuade her it was all imagination, and that, like me, she must have dreamed it, but she was very obstinate, and packing up her few belongings at once, she left St. Ives by the midday train. On another occasion, again in St. Ives, but this time in another house—St. Ives boasts of quite a few haunted houses—I dreamed I was shaving, when suddenly, in addition to my own reflection in the glass, I saw that of a strange man looking over my right shoulder. It was a very arresting face, the cheeks white and hollow, the hair lank and brushed right back from the forehead. He had short side whiskers, and as his dark eyes met mine in the mirror they shone menacingly. This gave me such a shock that I awoke. A few seconds later, hearing footstep pass my door and hurriedly ascend the staircase leading to the next landing, I immediately searched the landing and the adjacent rooms, but found no one. The following day my housekeeper,

a matter-of-fact Londoner, who, excepting one servant, was the only person sleeping in my house, remarked to me at breakfast :

" I really think, Mr. O'Donnell, this house is haunted. Not that I believe in ghosts, or anything of the sort, but there were such queer noises in the house, footsteps and opening and shutting of doors, and once someone came to my door and rapped loudly on it. I got up and went to the door with my electric torch, but no one was there, and the house was absolutely still."

I did not tell her what she had just said did not surprise me as I, too, had been disturbed by a ghost. I merely said, " A rat, perhaps," and went on with my meal. She left very soon afterwards.

Dreams, I am sure, are often due either to natural or supernatural occurrences happening in close proximity to the dreamer.

CHAPTER IX

GLAMIS AND OTHER SCOTTISH HAUNTINGS

In the interim between my leaving school and going to Dublin to read for the Royal Irish Constabulary, I was, as I have already said, a pupil on a farm in Forfarshire, not very far from the coast, and whilst I was there the steward of Glamis came one day to have luncheon with us. During the meal, the farmer, knowing that I was interested in ghosts, kindly asked the steward something about the Strathmore hauntings.

"Is it really true," he said, "that there is a room at Glamis, the exact locality of which is only known to three people, the Earl of Strathmore, his eldest son and heir as soon as he attains his majority, and yourself?"

"Quite true," was, if I remember rightly, the steward's reply; but, anyhow, his answer was in the affirmative.

"And is it also true," the farmer asked, "that the son and heir on learning the secret that room is alleged to contain never smiled again?"

"That I cannot say," the steward remarked, "but anyhow *I* am smiling." Whereupon, of course, everyone present smiled too, and that was all we could get out of him.

With the traditions of Glamis, as narrated by Sir

Walter Scott, John Ingram and others, most of us are familiar, but with the following version of the hauntings (to the best of my knowledge it has never appeared in print before) I believe very few people are acquainted. It was told me by the niece of the man who experienced the hauntings, and I did not for one moment doubt that she was telling me the truth.

" One of my uncles," she said, " was for a while an assistant gamekeeper on the estate, away back in the thirties or forties, long before the time of this present earl. He was a tall, fine young man, with a very tender heart where women were concerned, and as there happened to be a very bonnie maid at the castle at that time, he soon fell, of course, head over ears in love with her.

" Now Maggie, for that was this lassie's name, was a bit of a flirt. What young and pretty girl is not ? " (Here my informant, who was pretty enough herself, looked not a little self-conscious.) " And Jock and she were often having tiffs in consequence. Well, one June evening, when all the family were away, she promised to meet my uncle in one of the great oak-panelled rooms in the oldest part of the castle. They arranged to meet at nine o'clock, and my uncle, who would have died sooner than be late on such an occasion, arrived at the trysting-place long before the appointed time. It was a fine night and the moonbeams streaming in through the tall windows illuminated the apartment with a soft, white light. My uncle, in a vain effort at first to fight his impatience, began studying the pictures on the walls, and much to his own surprise, he soon found himself gazing at one of the portraits with the

utmost interest and fascination. It was that of a young lady clad in white. She had long curly hair, dainty, delicate features, and eyes that seemed to glance appealingly at him from under their dark lashes. In short, it was quite the most beautiful face my uncle had ever seen. Every now and then he would walk away from it and stamp angrily up and down the floor, furious with Maggie for being late, and with himself for being so much in love with her, when he knew very well that she was an incorrigible flirt. Even at that very moment, he told himself, she might be hurrying off to keep an appointment with someone else—which, as he afterwards discovered, was, in fact, the case—and it was incredible folly and weakness on his part to have anything to do with her. Still he stayed on. Nine, ten and eleven o'clock struck as he paced up and down that long room, and every now and again halted in front of the picture, which fascinated and attracted him more and more each time he looked at it.

" At last, through very weariness, he was obliged to sit down, and in a short time he fell asleep. He had not slept long, however, before he awoke with a start, to see someone advancing towards him across the moonlit floor. At first he thought it was Maggie, but as the girl drew nearer and the moonbeams fell direct on her face, he saw, with a thrill, that it was not Maggie, but the exact counterpart of the portrait that had so attracted him. My uncle naturally stepped back in no little confusion and alarm, but the lady, as if to set him at his ease, smiled assuringly, and then putting a tapering finger to her lips, beckoned to him to advance. Filled now with the spirit of adventure and no longer mindful of

the fact that to be found in his employer's house at that hour of the night placed him in an awkward position, my uncle was about to obey, when a dark, shadowy form suddenly appeared behind the girl and threw something like a cloak or sack over her head. The scream the girl gave when this happened was agonizing beyond description, and my uncle would, of course, have rushed to her rescue, had he not found himself inexplicably unable to move hand or foot, The discovery so appalled him that he fainted.

" When he came to, he was lying on the floor of the room, quite alone, and with the beautiful portrait, whose living counterpart he had but just seen the victim of a tragedy he had been unable to prevent, still looking appealingly at him.

" He never narrated this story," my informant added, " outside his own family, for fear of ridicule, and maybe it was only a dream, though he always maintained otherwise."

I asked my informant if her uncle ever married Maggie, and she said no, he never married at all. He never forgave Maggie for not keeping the appointment, and after that night could think of no one but the lady in the portrait.

My friends took me one day to see a reputedly haunted castle overlooking Lunan Bay. Extensive renovations and repairs were in progress, and on my friends asking the workmen if they had ever seen or heard anything they couldn't explain there, they replied, " We often hears things, but we've only seen something once."

One of them then told us the following experience which they had had quite recently.

"It was last week," he said, "Thursday afternoon; about half-past four. Three of us, Jock, Ned and myself, were doing some repairs on one of the spiral stone staircases here, when we suddenly heard a curious sound. We had all heard the castle was said to be haunted by a phantom leg, supposed to be Cardinal Beaton's wooden leg, but we had only laughed at the idea. Now, however, the noise we heard was so much like the tapping sound of a wooden leg, that we all stopped our work and looked at one another. Tap, tap, tap, down the stairs it came, until it sounded close to us, and then, suddenly, coming round the bend of the stairs, we saw an eerie blue light coming towards us. It was coming up the stairs at a fairly rapid pace, and it took us so much by surprise that we sprang back against the wall as if we'd been shot, and remained there, still as death, until it had passed us and was out of sight. I can laugh now as I think of the expression on the faces of my mates, they looked so scared, but I didn't laugh then, I can tell you! I was just as badly scared as they were.

"Some of the other men working there heard the 'tapping' too, and when we spoke about it to the servants at the castle, next day, they only said, 'You needn't be at all afraid; what you heard and saw we often hear and see in the same place, and it's quite harmless. It must be the ghost of Cardinal Beaton, for the sound is exactly like the tapping of a wooden leg.'"

On our way home that day, we crossed the Esk, and my friends, pointing out to me a spot on one of its banks, said it bore the reputation for being haunted, and told me the following story:

A Cockney, clad, as London Cockneys who visit Scotland so after are, in full Highland costume, that is to say in bonnet, plaid, kilt and sporran, was crossing the field in the direction of the river one day, when he espied on its banks, at the spot to which I have alluded, an old man, seated with his back turned towards him, fishing. Now the Cockney, again as Cockneys so frequently are, was of a very facetious disposition, and thinking to give the old man a start and make him think the trout were beginning to rise, he playfully threw a pebble into the water. It fell with a "plump," but still the old man went on fishing, without apparently hearing it.

"The old blighter's deaf," the Cockney said to himself. "I'll try one a bit bigger."

Accordingly he bent down, and picking up another stone about double the size of the one he had previously thrown, he hurled it in the water, so close to the fisherman that it almost grazed his head as it whizzed past him. Still the latter did not stir, but sat there quite complacently, apparently watching his float, which was absolutely motionless.

"Gosh, he must be stone deaf and half blind too," the Cockney muttered, "otherwise he would have seen and heard that splash. Well, here goes, I'll see if this will waken him." He now picked up a piece of rock about the size of his fist and aiming at the float, threw it with all his might. To his consternation, however, the missile did not take a straight course, but, swerving, went in a bee line for the back of the fisherman and passed right through him. With one yell, the Cockney turned tail and fled.

I have heard other stories of this haunting, but the one I have just narrated appeals to me most. A man who had been fishing in this spot, my friends told me, had been found poisoned there many years ago, and everyone declared that it was the ghost of this fisherman that haunted the riverside. As a matter of fact, there are more rivers haunted than not haunted, and my own experiences with riverside ghosts may form the subject of a chapter later on.

The farm I was on as a pupil at this period was not very far from Montrose, where there were several houses reputed to be haunted. One stood pretty well in the centre of the town, and was occupied by a spinster with whom I took French lessons. The room in which I took these lessons was on the ground floor, and it was separated from a room in the rear by folding doors. Well, the first morning I went to the house, I arrived about a quarter of an hour too early. While I was sitting alone in the front room, I heard someone coughing. The sounds came from the adjoining room, and were so distressing that I became quickly alarmed, fearing the sufferer—a consumptive, I thought—would either break a blood vessel or choke. Indeed, I got up from my seat with the intention of running into the hall to summon assistance, when the coughing abruptly ceased. A moment or so later my French mistress entered the room.

"Someone in your house has a very bad cough," I remarked. "Is it you?"

"No," she said, eyeing me, as I thought, rather curiously. "I have no cough. I hope you were not alarmed?"

" I was a bit," I replied. " It sounded like someone in the last gasp of consumption."

My instructress smiled. " Oh, no," she said, " it's not as bad as that. If you hear the same sounds again, take no notice."

The next morning I arrived about the same time as before and again heard the coughing. It was just as distressing to me as on the previous occasion, and despite the assurances I had received, I got so alarmed that I ran out into the hall, almost colliding with the young maidservant who had let me in.

To my surprise, she burst out crying.

Thinking my abrupt appearance had perhaps startled her, for she didn't look more than fifteen, I muttered some kind of apology, whereupon she exclaimed :

" Oh, it isn't you, sir ; it's the ghost."

" The ghost ! " I ejaculated. " What ghost ? "

" Oh, what have I said ? " she sobbed. " What have I said ? "

" Is the house haunted then ? " I enquired.

" I daren't tell you, sir," she replied. " The mistress would be ever so angry if I did. She won't have a word said about it."

" Then it is haunted," I went on. " Is it the ghost that coughs ? "

The girl nodded. " For mercy's sake, don't say I told you, sir," she pleaded, " or I shall get into ever such trouble, and may lose my place."

I was about to question her further, when a latch-key was inserted in the front door and the door handle began to turn. Motioning to me to get back into the sitting-room at once, the little maid flew,

and I never had another opportunity of speaking to her on the subject.

Knowing that it would be quite useless to try and get any information out of my instructress, I made enquiries elsewhere, and finally learned that the house had long borne the reputation for being haunted, and that my French mistress had been able to acquire it at a very low rental on that account. No one could tell me anything very definite about the ghost, saving that it was always heard coughing and was supposed to be the phantasm of an old man who had died in the house many years ago under somewhat suspicious circumstances.

I narrated this experience of the coughing ghost to a barber in Perth one day, while he was cutting my hair, and he was immensely interested.

"Why, that reminds me," he said, "of an experience I once had in London, and it all but ended fatally too. I was in business in Brixton at the time, and I often used to spend my evenings at the Crystal Palace and the Aquarium. One evening, at the Aquarium, while I was watching the performance of a man who claimed to be a hypnotist, I got into conversation with a foreigner, an Italian, sitting next me. We started arguing about hypnotism. I said there was nothing in it, and that it was all a fraud, and he contradicted me. We grew quite heated, and he ended by declaring he would give me a convincing proof.

"'At eleven to-morrow,' he said, 'I shall be in Birmingham, and you, where will you be?'

"Here, in Brixton, at my work," I replied.

"'Very well, sir,' the Italian answered, 'I will hypnotize you. Directly the clock begins to strike

eleven, you will have a violent fit of coughing. You will stop, just when I want you to.'

" ' I might cough even if you didn't want me to,' I observed drily.

" ' True,' he replied, ' but I will cough as well, and you shall hear me.'

" I laughed, and we parted quite good friends. By the following morning I had forgotten all about this conversation. Eleven o'clock came, and I was in the act of shaving a customer, when I suddenly felt I must cough. Mindful now of my conversation with the Italian, I struggled hard to overcome the inclination, but it was of no avail. I simply had to cough, and it was only by a miracle of luck I didn't give my customer a very ugly gash.

" Well, sir," the barber continued, " I went on coughing for I should think fully two minutes, and all the while I heard someone else coughing close beside me. Suddenly, something seemed to tell me to stop, and I obeyed. Besides my customer, who was sitting bolt upright in his chair looking at me with a scared expression on his face, there was only one other person, namely, my assistant, in the shop. I asked them both if they had coughed, and they said, ' No, but we heard someone else coughing in the shop besides you, though we could see no one. We were properly scared I can tell you.' "

" I might, of course," the barber added, " have attributed my own coughing purely to nerves, but it was that other coughing that beat me ; and beat those in the shop with me. My customer, in fact, got out of it as quickly as he could, and my assistant only stayed with me till he could find another place."

CHAPTER X

SOME SCOTTISH FAMILY GHOSTS

Scotland is far-famed for its family ghosts. Everyone has, of course, heard of the phantom drummer of Cortachy, who is invariably heard playing on his drum, sometimes to the accompaniment of ghostly pipes, before the death of a member of the Ogilvie family. There is quite a lot of corroborated evidence on the subject of the Ogilvie family ghost, and I was told when I was in Scotland that the Ogilvies themselves were firm believers in it. The family of Grant Rothiemurcus were haunted by the Bodach au Dun; the Kinchardines by the Lhamdearg, or spectre of the Bloody Hand, and the Tulloch Gorms by May Moulach, or the Girl with the Hairy Hand.

All these are families of distinction and according to the popular idea it is only families or clans of distinction that possess family ghosts. Such an idea, however, is erroneous. There are many obscure families in the West of Scotland and in the Western Isles that have been haunted for long centuries by fairies of the Glaistig species as well as by spirits of the dead and the more harrowing and alarming types of elementals. During my second visit to Scotland, which occurred after an interval of three years, I stayed with an old school-fellow,

Charlie Campbell, in Argyll. He was a keen sportsman (so was I at that period of my life), and it was arranged that we should fish one night on Loch Fynne. When the time came for us to set out, however, Campbell was taken ill and could not go, so at his suggestion (he would not hear of my being disappointed) I set off without him, accompanied only by one of his outdoor servants, a rugged, dour-looking Western islander, named Neil MacPherson. The night, though very fine and still, was dark, and ours appeared to be the only boat out. There were plenty of whales, however, and when we had got some little distance from the shore, they began spouting in closer proximity to our boat, so I thought, than was altogether pleasant, although MacPherson assured me that they were quite small and absolutely harmless. Well, we were fishing at anchorage in absolute silence, when, quite suddenly, I caught the far-off sound of oars.

"Who can they be?" I asked MacPherson, more for the sake of hearing myself speak, for we had been sitting in silence for a long time, than out of curiosity. "Fishermen?"

"I dinna ken, sir," MacPherson replied, and I thought I detected a trace of anxiety in his voice.

The sound came from the rear, I was sitting facing the bows of the boat, and, as they drew nearer, I turned round, but could see nothing. Everything behind and around me was wrapt in Stygian darkness, not a light visible anywhere.

"Oughtn't they to carry a light?" I remarked.

MacPherson did not answer. The sounds drew nearer still. I could hear the splashing of the water each time the blades of the oars struck it, and the

grating of the handles of the oars as they moved to and fro in the rowlocks. But still I could discern nothing. On the boat came, and as it passed by us, so close that its oars seemed but a foot or two from our gunwales, I was impressed by the silence of the rowers (there appeared to be several), none of whom uttered a sound. This silence struck me as very extraordinary, because in my experience boatmen, be they fishermen or ordinary sailors, invariably talk.

The night being very still, I could hear the sound of the oars for some time after the boat had passed, and it was not until I could again hear nothing but the familiar and spasmodic spouting of the whales that I spoke to MacPherson.

"Shall we try somewhere else?" I asked. "It doesn't seem much use staying here. I haven't had as much as a bite."

"You will forgive me, sir," he replied, "if I suggest we go home."

"Aren't you feeling well?" I said, for there was a tremor in his voice.

"Not very well, sir," he responded shortly.

"All right," I said, "we'll go." Then, before I was really conscious of what I was saying, I added, "It isn't anything to do with that boat that passed us, is it?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, solemnly, "that was the death boat. It has haunted our family for hundreds of years, and is never seen or heard saving before the death of one of us. We all heard it the night before my father was drowned off Portree in the Island of Skye, and again immediately before the death of my youngest sister. I dread to-morrow, because I am

sure I shall get a telegram saying that my brother Angus is dead."

"I sincerely trust not, Neil," I replied. "Mayn't you be mistaken? You didn't see your brother Angus, did you?"

"Yes, sir," he responded, endeavouring to steady his voice, "I did. There were four rowers—there are always four—dressed in black, and Angus, my brother, dressed just like them, was sitting in the stern. It is he who is dead."

The sense of finality accompanying this speech seemed to render any further discussion of the subject useless, so after a slight pause, I tactfully turned our talk into another channel. MacPherson's surmises, however, proved to be correct, for at noon the following day, he received a telegram from his mother saying that Angus had been caught in a sudden squall and drowned.

My friend, Charlie Campbell, being related to the MacIvors, the family whom Sir Walter Scott credits with being haunted by the Bodach Glass,[1] I asked him one day, if there was any truth in the traditional haunting, and his reply was:

"Well, I have never seen the Bodach Glass myself, but a relative of mine, who once lived in this house, assured me that he had. He said he was walking one moonlight night down to the beach (i.e., the beach of Loch Fynne) to go for a row, when he saw a very tall man in a shepherd's plaid stalking up and down on the shore. Wondering who the man could be, for he did not recognize him as one of the servants or men working on the land, and

[1] See "Waverley," Bodach signifies (from the Saxon) bode, a messenger, a tidings bearer.

there was no visitor, as far as he knew, at any of the cottages, he called out and asked him what he was doing there. The man then turned round and looked at my relative. The latter," Campbell went on, " was fairly courageous, but he said the stranger's countenance was so shocking that it completely unnerved him. It appeared to be the face of an actual skeleton, and as my relative stared at it in mute astonishment and horror, the man raised a hand and shook it menacingly at him. Then, turning slowly on his heels, he walked away, and seeming to mingle with the moonbeams and shadows, as ghostly appartitions so often do, the phantasm abruptly vanished. A day or two later my relative received the sad news that his father (the then owner of this property), who was away on a visit, had died suddenly in London."

The Bodach Glass and other such apparitions invariably prognosticate evil, and are by no means pleasant to look at. There are, however, other and less horrifying Scottish family ghosts. Some are said to be very beautiful and benevolently disposed, although they can also be evilly disposed, often rendering themselves extremely noxious to some unfortunate member of the family. The Glaistigs are a case in point. They are even yet declared to haunt the homes of rich and poor alike in Argyll and the Hebrides. Like the Banshee, the Glaistig is always in the guise of a woman and is usually very beautiful. Her behaviour, however, varies. If she is benevolently disposed to a family, she acts as a kind of guardian angel and warns them of death and danger ; but if she is antagonistic, she slaps them in the face, pinches them and sometimes, going a step

further, thrashes them so severely that they never entirely recover from the effects.

The above statement with regard to the Glaistig will seem rather tall to most of my readers, but, nevertheless, not only peasants but people belonging to the cultured and wealthy classes have told me that the Glaistig does actually behave as I have said. I will quote a recorded instance.

A minister, whose family was haunted by a Glaistig, was himself sceptical, attributing the belief in a family ghost, as at that time he attributed all belief in the superphysical, to mere superstition. One day he went for a bathe in the sea near his home, and on coming out of the water sat down on a rock to rest. The weather being very warm, he presently became drowsy and eventually fell asleep. He awoke with a stinging sensation on one cheek, just as if it had been smartly slapped, and on looking around to discover some cause, saw a tall girl, clad from head to foot in a light green dress of some filmy material, walking away from him. She had such beautiful golden hair and such a graceful figure that the minister, who, despite his calling, often went out of his way to do homage to a pretty woman, couldn't resist the temptation of following her and trying to catch her up in order to get a good view of her face. His efforts to overtake her, however, proved futile. Fast as he walked, he never got any nearer to her, and at length his curiosity getting the better of him he was beginning to run, when suddenly she halted and faced him. In his wildest flights of imagination the minister had never seen so lovely a being. She had delicate features, the nose a trifle *retroussé*, the eyes, which

were set rather far apart, long in shape and of a blue-grey colour ; the mouth, of medium size, a cupid's bow in shape and furnished with the most perfect teeth ; she was of slight build, and her hands with their long tapering fingers and filbert nails would have met with the unqualified approval of even such a connoisseur as Théophile Gautier. She appeared to be very angry, and said in Gaelic, " Come to this spot at midnight to-morrow, and I will punish you." She then walked on, and the minister, who tried to follow her, but found he could not, as he had suddenly lost the use of his limbs, watched her mount a steep rock and disappear from view on the other side of it.

On recovering the use of his limbs a few minutes later, he hastily ascended the rock and found that the far side of it was a sheer precipice and that its base was washed by the sea, which at that spot must have been at least ten or twelve feet deep. Much mystified, he returned home. He tried to treat the girl's threat as a joke and to dismiss the whole thing from his mind, but as the evening advanced he found that he couldn't help thinking of it, and in the end, yielding to an irresistible impulse, he went to the beach. The girl, standing exactly where she had parted from him the previous night, was waiting for him.

She held a rod in one hand and with the other she beckoned to him to approach. Little suspecting what was in store for him he obeyed her summons, and received such a severe thrashing that he was waled all over from head to foot. As he might have anticipated, perhaps, from his former experience, from the moment she commenced beat-

ing him until she left off, he found that he could neither cry out nor move.

"That will do," she exclaimed at last. "You will come here again at the same time to-morrow night."

She then climbed on to the rock washed by the sea and disappeared in exactly the same manner as she had done before.

Fearing ridicule the minister told no one what had happened. He was in great pain all the following day, but, in spite of this and his determination never to go near the girl again, he was compelled by some power he could not resist to obey her command. He met her again at midnight, and she thrashed him even more pitilessly than before, bidding him come to her again the next night at the same time.

It was in vain that he tried to resist the force that was impelling him, he went, and everything occurred as before, saving that the girl, the following night, bade him come to her in a month's time.

"You will be here at midnight," she said, "in four weeks from to-day, and you will then receive your final punishment."

The minister was so castigated this time that he could hardly crawl home. Hoping to elude the girl's magnet power, he left the island the next day and travelled south to London. However, he had only been there a day or so, when a kind of fever, the exact nature of which the doctor who attended him could not define, laid him low, and at midnight on the day he should have met the girl in green he died.

The minister, it is alleged, eventually confessed to a belief in the Glaistig; indeed he could hardly do otherwise than identify her with the girl in green,

and although he attributed his illness to the thrashings she had given him, he expressed an insatiable longing to see her once again. Those who have had no personal experience of psychic phenomena, let alone Glaistigs and their ways, will doubtless attribute the above story told by the minister to some strange kind of delusion, and in my opinion such incredulity is only natural, for, after all, it is very difficult to believe in superphysical phenomena, if you have not had some experience of them.

During my sojourn in Scotland, a native of Tiree told me that a house there called Tigh au Eilein (i.e., Island House) was haunted for centuries by a Gruagach[1] in the form of a little woman with long yellow hair, whose face was seldom, if ever, seen. She usually confined herself to the attics, where she was often heard making a noise. Occasionally, however, she would visit the servants at night, and if they had been idle during the day, or had in any way offended her, she would pinch or even beat them. The haunting, which my informant stated with great emphasis was quite authentic, went on till well within the last century.

Tiree, apparently, is a much haunted island. On its northern shore is a beach called Cladach a Chrogain. It comprises about 1,500 acres of shingle, and at the time of my visit to Argyle was altogether as wild and lonely a spot as one could find in the British Isles. Possibly, the hand of progress which is never still has wrought some change, but it could hardly transform the atmosphere which, at night-

[1] In Argyle, the term Gruagach is regarded as a mere alternative of Glaistig, but in certain other parts of Scotland Gruagachs and Glaistigs are deemed distinctly different species of phenomena.

time especially, strongly suggested all kinds of superphysical horrors.

One haunting, in particular, attracted much attention. It was the haunting by a phantom in the form of a large black dog, of a somewhat similar species to the "Thrash" and "Striker," in Lancashire,[1] the "Padfoot," in Yorkshire, and the "Shuck," in Norfolk and Cambridge. Several of the older inhabitants of Tiree, so they declared, had seen this phantom following them, and they believed that if it barked once or twice it was all right, but if it barked three times it was a sure sign that it would overtake them, in which case they, or someone very closely connected with them, would die very shortly.

They told me a dog ghost very like it in appearance but not quite the same haunted Heynish Hill in the south-west of Tiree, and another dog ghost the rocky shore near Balvaig. My informants, however, assured me that something infinitely more horrible was to be seen and heard on the seagirt rock, close to Balvaig, known locally as the Grador.

I asked them what it was, and they said, "Something naked, not unlike a human body in form, but with a very grotesque and wholly diabolical face." It was occasionally seen in broad daylight, though more often between 2 and 4 a.m., and its chief characteristic was antipathy to dogs. It was said that a dog belonging to a Tiree fisherman swam one morning to the rock and failed to return, and on a search being made for it, it was found lying on the rock with all its skin scraped off, as if by long nails or talons. It was furthermore mutilated in a manner

[1] See "Lancashire Folklore," by Harland and Wilkinson.

too horrible to describe, and died in great agony shortly after being found. This hatred of dogs appears to be a striking feature of many of the Western Island and West of Scotland ghosts. On the hills between Loch Tuath[1] and Loch Cuan there is a spot reputed to be haunted by various species of ghosts that exhibit fiendish satisfaction in torturing not only dogs, but animals in general. Many stories declared to be authentic are told of these ghosts. The following is an example :

A man was crossing the hills one day with his dog, a terrier, when he saw a tall woman with long yellow hair standing on the spot that was said to be haunted. At first he took her to be a material being, but on looking at her closely he noticed there was a something peculiar and shadowy about her, something which made him realize that she was no creature of flesh and blood but an entity from quite another world.

When he first caught sight of her, his dog whined and evinced symptoms of fear, but on his approaching nearer it became angry and rushed at her, snarling savagely, whereupon she snatched it up in her arms, and ran off with it, taking cover behind a rock. Being fond of his dog, the man, though frightened, ran after the ghost woman, and on looking behind the rock found his dog lying dead in a pool of blood. Handfuls of hair had been torn from its body, and apparently it had been strangled.

There was no sign of the woman anywhere, nor any place near at hand in which she could possibly have hidden. In the opinion of those who were living in that locality, and whose forebears had

[1] Tuath or North Loch ; Cuan or Cumhan.

lived there before them, she was a Glaistig who was well known to be inimical to all living things, especially to dogs, and who had haunted those hills for generations.

With reference to Glaistigs and Gruagachs, which are peculiar to Scotland, I would point out that some writers confuse them with Banshees, which are essentially Irish. Glaistigs and Gruagachs, unlike Banshees, are not invariably attached to one family only ; they haunt families somewhat indiscriminately as well as houses and localities. The Banshee, I repeat, is purely a family ghost, and its nature is one of extreme exclusiveness and discrimination, since it never haunts a family that is not, in part at least, of true Celtic Irish extraction.

Furthermore, whereas Glastigs and Gruagachs would seem capable of assuming both male and female guise (though more often, it is true, they choose the latter), Banshees invariably appear in the form of a woman.

CHAPTER XI

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH AN AMERICAN GHOST

After my failure to pass the Medical for the Royal Irish Constabulary, and following upon my visit to Argyle, I migrated to the United States, with a view to ranching in the Far West. I travelled on board the "Majestic," a 10,000-tonner of the White Star Line, then one of the largest and best-equipped ships afloat.

Among the passengers were Lord and Lady Randolph Churchill, the late Julius Price, who was on a trip round the world for one of the illustrated papers, and several American millionaires. The journey was quite uneventful, as the majority of such journeys are, but my talks—I was only twenty years of age—with certain of the passengers on board impressed me very much. It was my custom in those days not to wear a hat, except, of course, in the very extremes of weather, and I was parading the deck one morning, bareheaded as usual, when Lord Randolph Churchill stopped me and very anxiously enquired if it was my intention to walk about hatless in New York.

"At this time of year," he said, "it's sometimes terribly hot in New York, and if you land there with no hat, you run a very great risk of sunstroke."

"Then I'll wear one," I replied, for I have no desire to die just yet."

I told him that I had often seen Frank Townsend, the father of the more illustrious Charles L. Townsend, play cricket on the Close at Clifton without a hat in the most scorching sun heat, and added that I supposed he felt no ill effect from the sun on account of his hair, which was very thick and curly.

"What age man is he?" Lord Randolph asked.

I told him I thought about forty, whereupon he said:

"He evidently thinks going without a hat will preserve his hair, but it won't. There's no greater fallacy. I've known scores of men who have done the same thing and eventually became absolutely bald. Baldness is in the blood, you inherit it just the same as you inherit gout and dipsomania, and nothing you take or do will prevent it."

I never saw Frank Townsend after he gave up playing cricket, and often wondered whether what Lord Randolph prophesied about him came true. I asked Lord Randolph if he believed in ghosts, but before he could reply, someone (his secretary, I think) interrupted us, and I never had another opportunity of speaking to him. From the expression that came into his face, however, at my somewhat naïve question, I am inclined to think he was an out and out sceptic, but I may, of course, have been mistaken.

On my arrival in New York, I was met by one of Gaze's agents, and directed to an hotel in Broadway. A big railway strike was on at the time, and I learned to my consternation that there was small chance of my reaching my destination till it was over. The railway officials in New York strongly advised me to wait, and warned me that if I proceeded at

once I did so at my own risk. They would not guarantee that I would get even as far as Philadelphia.

Fearing that my money would not eke out, if I delayed, I decided to push on, so after remaining in Broadway for two days I boarded a train at the B. & O. depôt and set out West. And here let me digress for a moment, in order to say a few words regarding the associations of my family with certain of the Eastern American towns. My great-grandfather, John O'Donnell, ran away from Trough Castle, County Clare (owing to his father, who was never kind to him, having ordered some pet birds of his to be destroyed), and coming to London, he became acquainted with some very wealthy and influential English people, who obtained a cadetship for him in the service of the East India Company.

After some years of strenuous work, however, he tired of India and the E.I.C. and accepted the post of captain on board a privateer. In this capacity he helped to quiet a mutiny that had broken out among the Lascars, taking very drastic steps in doing so, and subsequently he was called upon to answer for his conduct before the then Governor-General, Warren Hastings. The account of his trial, which was published some years ago in "Bengal Past and Present," the journal of the Calcutta Historical Society, is full of interest. He was, I am glad to say, honourably acquitted.

After he had thus gained experience, he traded with China in a ship of his own, and in this manner he amassed a considerable fortune. His adventurous spirit then led him to undertake an expedition[1] to

[1] See "Original Letters from India" (1779–1815), by Mrs. Eliza Fay. With Introduction, etc., by E. M. Forster. Published 1925. Also the diary of my father.

Egypt, and on this journey disaster again overtook him. He was robbed of all he possessed by a band of marauding Arabs, and left nearly naked in a scorching desert. However, he avoided sunstroke by tying his shirt, the only garment left him by the Arabs, round his head, and in this fashion he succeeded in eventually reaching the coast, where he was picked up by a passing vessel and taken to India.

Arriving in Bombay, he was received with joy by his friend and former partner, Mr. Huggins, who again very generously took him into partnership. He now quickly amassed a second fortune, and extending his trading ventures to China and the U.S.A., he was so struck with the beauty of Baltimore that he decided to settle there. The following extract from the "Maryland Journal" of August 12, 1785, is illuminating :

" On Tuesday evening last arrived here direct from China the East Indianman " Pallas," commanded by her owner, Captain John O'Donnell. She has on board an extensive and valuable cargo, consisting of a variety of teas, China silks, satins, nankeens, etc. We are extremely happy to find the commercial reputation of this tour so far increased as to attract the attention of gentlemen who are engaged in carrying on this distant but beneficial trade. It is no unpleasing sight to see the crew of the ship, Chinese, Maltese, Japanese and Moors, with a few Europeans, all habited according to the different countries to which they belong and employed together as brethren."

And again, " Captain O'Donnell advertised his cargo for sale by public vendue in October. His venture proved profitable and greatly increased the

fortune he had brought from India, which he informed Richard Parkinson, who reports it in his "Tours of America, 1798-9," amounted to between sixty-five and seventy thousand pounds sterling, a great fortune for those days and one which made its possessor a man of mark."

With the decision that had characterized all my great-grandfather's actions, he decided to cast in his lot with the young and growing city of Baltimore, and the "Maryland Journal" for October 16, 1785, announces his marriage thus:

"Captain John O'Donnell, an eminent merchant, late from the East Indies, to Miss Sallie Chew Elliot, daughter of Captain Thomas Elliot, of Fell's Point, Baltimore."

About this same time, he purchased a large plantation, consisting of nearly 2,000 acres, on the northwestern branch of the Patapsco River, some six miles from the heart of the town. He named it "Canton," to commemorate the fact that he had transported the first cargo to arrive at Baltimore from Canton. Here he constructed for himself a large house, long and low, with deep verandas, somewhat similar to the buildings then in vogue among the high officials in India. He made one more voyage to India and China in his ship, "Chesapeake," and then retired altogether from the sea. With ample means at their command, he and his beautiful young wife were leaders in Baltimore society, and their lavish entertainments were for many years quite a feature in Maryland life. Indeed, he would seem to have lived after the manner of an Indian Nabob.[1]

[1] For descriptions of his habitations and mode of living, see "Travels

The spirit that had prompted him to become a Captain of Marines was perhaps responsible for his taking a commission in the 27th Regiment of United States Militia. He was subsequently its colonel. He died at his principal county residence, "Canton," on October 5th, 1805, in the 56th year of his age. In its obituary notice of him, the "Maryland Journal" remarks: "He was the founder of the elegant edifice in which the dancing assemblies are held, and in which the public library is deposited, the handsomest and, perhaps, the most spacious for such purpose to be seen in the United States. He projected and carried into effect (solely with his own means) the supply of good water for shipping at Fell's Point, built warehouses and wharves (one of them is still, i.e., in 1928, called after him), and was president of the Fire Insurance Company in this State. Nor did he abstain from politics (being an Irishman, I suppose the love of them was in his blood), for he twice represented Baltimore in the Legislature of Maryland, and for his speech in favour of the Potomac Canal he was generally known as the 'Father of the Potomac Canal.'" He left what was for those days a vast fortune, and some of his china, duly labelled with his name, belongs to the United States Government, and is to be seen in the National Museum in Washington.

It is interesting to note that the executors of his will, the guardians of his children, were his intimate friends, William Patterson, father of Madam Elizabeth Bonaparte,[1] wife of Jerome Bonaparte, and Charles

in America 100 years ago," by Thomas Twining in Harper's Black and White Series, N.Y., 1893; also "Tour in America" (1789–9), by Richard Parkinson.

[1] Born 1785, died 1875.

Oliver, names well known in the history of Baltimore.

Madam Bonaparte, then but a girl, although married, writing to her father from England, August 14th, 1805, after citing her troubles and anxieties regarding her endeavours to obtain recognition from Napoleon Bonaparte, who had offered her a pension of 1,200 dollars a year, on condition that she returned to the U.S.A., and gave up the name of Bonaparte, says :

" I request you will not mention a word of my affairs to Mr. O'Donnell, for although he would not willingly injure me by telling, yet he is incapable of keeping a secret."

This throws a somewhat amusing light on my great-grandfather, " talkativeness " being obviously accounted one of his failings. In one of his voyages to India in his own vessel, my great-grandfather numbered among his passengers Gore Ouseley, afterwards Sir Gore Ouseley, whose family have long been associated with the East, and who are connected with us by marriage.

Of John O'Donnell's children, Elliot, my grandfather, who was born in Baltimore, was the only one to settle in Ireland. On the death of his father, he came into possession of Trough Castle, and certain property in Limerick, and took up his residence in the former. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and married Sarah Vize, to whom I have already referred.

Regarding John O'Donnell's other children, Columbus,[1] the eldest, came into most of his wealth.

[1] For his biography, see " Baltimore Past and Present," published in Baltimore in 1871, by Richardson and Bennett.

He, Columbus, was educated at St. Mary's College, Baltimore, the Alma Mater of many of the most distinguished men in Maryland. It subsequently became a theological seminary, I believe, of the Catholic Church. Entering the U.S.A. Army, Columbus gained great distinction in the campaign of 1812, and rose to the rank of General. Leaving the army when he was still very young, he turned all his attention to commerce—I presume he inherited his commercial faculty from his father, though whence the latter had acquired it is a mystery, since none of his ancestry, on either side of the family, were ever engaged in trade—and eventually became a director of the Baltimore and Ohio Railway, a director of the Union Bank of Baltimore, President of the First National Bank of Baltimore, President of the Baltimore Water Company, and President of the Baltimore Gas Light Company, a post which he held for over forty consecutive years.

He married, and it will, perhaps, be a matter of interest to my American readers to note that among his present day descendants in the States are the New York and Rochelle Iselins of yachting and banking renown, the Lees of Washington and Southern State fame, the Carrolls, descendents of the Carroll who signed the Declaration of Independence, the Poores, and certain of the O'Donnells of New York.

Columbus O'Donnell lived on into the seventies of the last century, and his bones, like those of his father, are laid to rest in American soil.

John O'Donnell possessed a personality that arrested attention at once. His son Columbus was more ordinary, and although he had many of his

father's qualities, he lacked certain of his idiocyncrasies. He was, for instance, just as energetic, but his energy was more concentrated, and it was unaccompanied by that spirit of restlessness and adventure that was so peculiarly characteristic of John O'Donnell. He was a born fighter—most Irishmen are—but his other qualities kept his fighting instinct well under control. It was not so always in his father's case, the latter, I think, being at times rather too outspoken and aggressive. Though I have no direct evidence that either John or his son Columbus was particularly interested in the occult, I think it very possible that John was, since he by no means lacked imagination, but with regard to Columbus, who was hard-headed and practical to a degree, it would have surprised me to find the psychic faculty even latent in him.

And now to revert to myself and my journey West.

With me, in the same compartment of the train, was a man of foreign appearance, having a swarthy skin and dark, dreamy-looking eyes. He sat facing me, and we soon got into conversation. He told me he was a Sicilian, the Count de Paoli, and said that he had had to leave his country owing to the machinations of the Mafia Secret Society. He said that his father, when a boy, had been led by sheer patriotism and love of adventure to join the Society, never doubting for an instant that it was the purely political organization it then professed to be, formed to rid Sicily of foreign oppression ; but as soon as he discovered that this alleged aim was mere camouflage and that the Mafia was, in reality, a Society composed in the main of common or garden

thieves, blackmailers and murderers, he resigned his membership. In consequence, he was stabbed to death one evening under the windows of his own house.

"And the Society's vengeance," my informant went on, "did not end with the murder of my father. My mother was shot dead, and a few years later my only brother was murdered too. His body, stabbed in a dozen places, was found floating in the harbour of Palermo.

"After that," the Count de Paoli added, "I had to leave Sicily, as my life was no longer safe there; but no matter where I went, I kept receiving threatening letters, and only recently I had one in New Orleans, warning me that I should be killed unless I left the United States within the next six months."

I asked him if he had shown it to the police, and he replied:

"I might show it them, but they can't protect me from the Mafia. No one and nothing can."

He then went on to explain to me why he had come to the States. He said he dreamed one night in Paris that he met a very beautiful girl in a park in Chicago, and that she told him to meet her there again at a certain time, and on a certain date. He promised he would, and the promise was sealed by a kiss. He said she was so lovely and absolutely real that he could not persuade himself it was only a dream, and he was now on his way to Chicago to keep the appointment.

He had barely finished his story when the train stopped at Crown Point, and the conductor announced that we should all have to get out. The strikers, he said, had pulled up the rails, and con-

sequently the train could not go on. The Count then suggested that we should hire a vehicle and drive to Riverdale, whence we could go on to Chicago by electric train, and to this I agreed. I found him a most delightful and entertaining companion, and on reaching Chicago I was truly sorry that I had to bid him good-bye, being unable to accompany him to the expensive hotel he had chosen to put up at, as my funds were by this time pretty well exhausted.

After thus parting from my travelling companion, I wandered about the streets for some time. I then turned into a restaurant, and while waiting there for a meal felt in my pocket for my purse. To my intense horror and dismay it was gone. I had undoubtedly been robbed. I thought at once of the Count. Had I been mistaken? Was he after all merely a clever and unscrupulous thief? But no, my instinct rebelled, it was—I would stake my soul on it—someone else who had robbed me. Unfortunately, after I had paid for my meal out of the few loose coins I had in my pockets, I had only two dollars left. I went to one hotel after another, but no one would take me in. I explained to them that I had been robbed of my purse, and that my luggage was still in the train somewhere between Crown Point and Chicago, owing to the strike, but they asked for payment in advance all the same, and when I informed them I only had enough cash on me to pay for a cablegram to Europe, they told me in none too polite lingo to "get out."

Weary and desperate, I wandered to the Pennsylvania depôt and was contemplating staying there all night, when a conductor, presumably noticing my

dejected looks, came up to me and asked me what was the matter. I told him, and he said, "I reckon I can help you. If you come along with me, I'll take you to an hotel where you will be put up all right."

From the kind expression in his eyes, I felt at once that I could trust him. He took me, therefore, to an hotel called the Oxford and introduced me to the proprietor, somewhat after this fashion :

" Say, boss, here's a young feller (nowadays he would probably have used the term " guy ") as wants a bed. Will yer fix him ? Yer can take it from me he's on the square."

The proprietor, a bald-headed man with a fat, pleasant face, looked me up and down, and then squirting a stream of tobacco juice over the floor in dangerous proximity to my boots, said, " All right, Ed., he kin stay."

We all three then went into a room and had a drink—that was in the days, of course, when America was " wet "—after which the passenger agent, with many expressions of goodwill towards me, took his departure. I never saw him again, but I shall always think of him as a true Samaritan, and one of the kindest people I have ever met. Had he not taken compassion on me, I should undoubtedly have had to remain in the depôt or in the streets of that awful city all night. Oddly enough, perhaps, I found the men in America far more sympathetic and kindly disposed towards me than the women.

The following morning, I cabled to my relatives in Europe for more money, and in what seemed an incredibly short time to me received a reply telling me to call at a certain bank in Chicago. I went to

the bank and showed the cablegram to a clerk, who would not at first give me the money.

"How can I tell you are the right person?" he expostulated. "Can you produce anyone to prove you are Elliott O'Donnell?"

I said that I could not, that although I had many wealthy and influential relatives in the States, and I named a few, pride forbade me making myself known to them. I was therefore a stranger in a strange land. He looked at me, and I looked at him.

"This cablegram is from Dublin," he said. 'Do you know Bray, because my old home is close to there?"

I replied in the affirmative, and after asking me a few questions about Bray, which I had no difficulty in answering, he asked me to sign a form, and when I had signed it, he handed over the money.

Luck, in that I had alighted upon a fellow-countryman, and an honest face, perhaps, for which I thanked heredity, had been my salvation. But for these assets, I should doubtless have had very considerable difficulty in obtaining the wherewithal to proceed on my journey.

After leaving the bank, I called at the British Consulate, and was informed that the Count was away. In my experience the officials of high rank at British Embassies and Consulates in foreign countries usually are away when fellow countrymen of no particular distinction call to see them. This is a matter into which no English Government, Conservative, Liberal or Labour, has ever, apparently, taken the trouble to enquire, but it is nevertheless a matter that has been—and probably still is—

responsible for any amount of bitterness and disloyalty among British emigrants and travellers. Over and over again, I have heard it said in the United States, that a Swede or a Dane, or a Dutchman (the Americans call Germans Dutchmen, a corruption no doubt of Deutche) can call at their Embassy or Consulate in any old clothes and the representatives of their respective countries will always see them, whereas in the case of the Britisher, he is seldom, if ever, granted an interview with a high official, unless he has some handle to his name, or is very well dressed.

I confess that when I met a cold rebuff that day on the steps of the Consulate in Chicago and was told there was no one there to see or advise me, I went away feeling anything but pleased with my own country.

That night a queer thing happened. I was standing in front of the crazy mirror in my bedroom, trying to shave with the very tenuous remains of a cake of soap, when I suddenly saw, reflected in the mirror, the face of my recent companion, the Count de Paoli. He was peering over my left shoulder, looking ghastly white and ill, and there was an expression of the deepest sorrow in his big, dark eyes. I swung round at once, but there was no one in the room, and when I looked in the glass again, I only saw my own white face reflected there.

CHAPTER XII

MORE AMERICAN EXPERIENCES

Some days after the incident with which I concluded my previous chapter I learned from someone staying in the hotel that the body of the Count de Paoli had been found in the Arlington Park, near Chicago, and that the circumstances left little or no doubt that he had been murdered. My informant, upon hearing that the Count had been " mixed up " with the Mafia, was, of course, intensely interested. He said the police already suspected some secret society and were on the trail of a man and woman, supposedly Italians, who had been seen with the Count in the Park. I asked if it were known upon what day and at what time the murder had been committed, and was told that the docror who examined the Count's body was of the opinion that death had taken place upon a certain day and hour that exactly coincided with my startling vision of the Count in the mirror. This, of course, did not surprise me. Whether the man and woman suspected of the murder were ever caught, I cannot say. As I had now gained permission to resume my journey by train, as far as I was concerned Chicago and everything connected with it speedily became a thing of the past.

However, before dismissing my Chicago sojourn from these pages, I would refer briefly to the Cronin

Mystery, which, whilst I was in Chicago, was still a general topic for discussion amongst the people. The facts were these :

On the evening of May 4th, 1889, an ordinary-looking man called at 470, North Clark Street, Chicago, the house of a Dr. Philip Henry Cronin, and asked him to come at once to the house of one of his employés who had been taken seriously ill. Dr. Cronin left his home in the company of this man and was never seen alive again. About a fortnight later, some ditch-cleaners at work in the Arlington Park noticed an offensive smell proceeding from a catch basin, and on examining this they found in it the decomposed remains of a man. The police, of course, were at once summoned, and the remains were speedily proved to be those of Dr. Cronin, who, obviously, had been barbarously murdered. As he was known to have been a prominent member of the Clan-na-Gael in Chicago, it was to that society that the local police at once turned their attention, and several of its members were subsequently arrested, only, however, to be discharged, and as far as I could gather the perpetrators of the crime were never brought to book. In alluding to the many theories that were then afloat regarding the crime, my informant told me that a friend of his, a few weeks before Dr. Cronin disappeared, very narrowly escaped being murdered in the same Park. This friend was very like Dr. Cronin in appearance, so much so that when photographs of Dr. Cronin came out in the Press, certain people were sure that they were those of this other man and jumped to the conclusion that the latter had been leading a dual life.

But to continue the story of his narrow escape. One day, as he was strolling through the Park with his dog, he suddenly realized that he was being followed. He kept on turning round sharply, but could see no one, although on one occasion he thought he heard the flutter of a woman's dress behind the bushes bordering the path. Well, this had been going on for some time, when he suddenly heard cries for help, and a woman came running up to him, with the request that he would go with her at once, as a friend of hers had fallen down in a fit some little distance off. He did not go. There was something about the woman he did not like. Not only was she " made up," but her walk and manner strongly suggested a man in disguise, and in addition to this, his dog, a sagacious animal, growled angrily at her. When he refused to accompany her, she became very abusive, and only left him when he threatened to give her in charge. When he looked round some minutes later, for he still felt he was being followed, he saw two women, or at least two people clad like women, hide hurriedly behind some trees. At the same time he espied a keeper in the distance and hailed him ; but although both he and this man searched the Park thoroughly, they could not find the two women anywhere. The Park, my informant added, has always enjoyed a somewhat sinister reputation, and after the finding of Dr. Cronin's remains many people declared it to be haunted.

Because America is so modern, at least modern as regards its white civilization, my informant went on, people think that it cannot boast of many hauntings ; but this is a mistake. In reality, it is

as badly haunted as any other country. He then enumerated some of the most authentic cases of hauntings he had heard of in the States during the past few years, and the following brief notes of them,[1] I jotted down at the time.

A school at Newburyport kept by a lady was haunted by the phantom of a little boy with golden hair and dressed all in brown. This ghost was generally to be seen either peering through one of the windows, with an expression of infinite sadness in its big dark eyes, or wandering disconsolately up and down the stairs.

Pathetic and harmless though it would seem to have been this poor little phantasm had the most alarming effect on the scholars, and, as a consequence, the school rapidly diminished in numbers. My informant thought he had heard that it was obliged to close down eventually, but on this point was not quite sure. Apparently, there was no known cause for the hauntings, which, of course, may have been due to a phantasm of the living, or, in other words, to a projection. (I quoted several instances of the latter in my chapters on dreams.) Another haunting—equally authentic—occurred in connection with the driver of an engine on the Syracuse and Binghampton railway. The driver of this particular engine suddenly became haunted by the phantom of a woman, which, he declared, stood by his side and tried to throw him on the line.

The man who was with him on the engine used to see him engaged in a furious struggle with some, to him, invisible presence, and on one occasion he

[1] I subsequently discovered that all the cases I have enumerated appeared at the time in the Press.

heard a voice, unmistakably a woman's, say with a chuckle, "Now, Bill, I've got you and I'll throw you into the water." (They were crossing a river at the time.)

Finally, both men became so unnerved that they could not go on as they had been any longer, and declared that if they could not be transferred to another engine they must resign. They were transferred, and were not disturbed by any subsequent hauntings. My informant believed that the haunted engine was still in existence, adding that the last time he saw it (in one of the sheds of the Syracuse and Binghampton railway) he was told that no one would venture near it at night because of the ghost, which could frequently be heard there talking and laughing.

Another case referring to a railway. During the seventies of the last century great excitement was caused in the railway depôt at Newark by a real ghost train. Regularly at 12 p.m. on the 10th of every month a train was heard to rush through the depôt at express speed. Nothing was ever to be seen, but all who came to experience the phenomena —and as many as 600 persons were assembled on one occasion in the depôt—heard the screaming of an engine's whistle, accompanied by the rattle and clatter of wheels, as the invisible phantasm approached the station and rushed through it. This may well have been the original of "The Ghost Train" of stage renown.

A house in Virginia is still (or, at all events, was at the time I made my notes) haunted by the phantasm of a human head with wide open glaring eyes. It peers in through the windows and looks

down over the banisters on the landings, and always utters one word—" blood."

These seemed choice hauntings, and I wished I had been able to stay in Chicago to investigate them ; but I was forced to push on. I travelled from Chicago to Denver in a non-sleeper by the C.B. and Q. Railway, and found the heat simply overpowering.

I was feeling very ill when I alighted at Denver, and was only too glad to avail myself of the kind offer of a black railway official to take me to an hotel, " The Columbia," where the charges were strictly moderate. The second day of my stay there, feeling no better, I went to a drug store, and the proprietor of it, after I had told him my symptoms, said I had a mild form of Asiatic cholera, and must get an extension of my ticket.

I at once went to the railway depôt and asked the booking clerk to make my ticket available for another two or three days.

" Why ? " he asked, with that abruptness which seems to be characteristic of American officials. I shall never forget his facial expression when I told him. At the mere mention of cholera he sprang back as if he had been shot. I got the extension. Dean Hart, whose name was associated with St. John's Cathedral for so long, was alive then, and I went to see him. He informed me that a man named Robinson from Bristol was staying somewhere in the town and told me where he thought I might meet him. To a stranger in a strange city—and at that moment Denver seemed very strange to me—the prospect of meeting someone from a town one knows well is most alluring, and I set off, at once, in search of Robinson. I found him just

where Dean Hart suggested I might find him, and he proved to be very affable and entertaining.

At first I was, to him, simply Bristol in Denver, and I did nothing but answer questions, and say if—for example—the old drawbridge was still in existence, if electric trams had superseded the old 'bus trams, if the pantomimes at the Prince's Theatre were as good as ever; if I remembered the old "panto" favourite Fosbrooke, or "Fossy" as Bristolians affectionately styled him, and if he were still living, and so on and on. When he had at last exhausted all I had to tell him about Bristol and everything connected with it, he suggested I should accompany him to an adjacent restaurant and have "a bit." To this I willingly assented, though I took the precaution to inform him I had to be very careful what I ate or drank. Luncheon over, we sat and talked, and it was then that I summoned up the courage to touch upon my favourite subject. I asked him if he knew of any haunted houses in Denver, quite expecting him to wax hilarious, for at that date most people laughed hysterically at the bare mention of the word "ghosts," no matter whether they believed in them or not; but I was mistaken.

"It's odd you should have asked me that," Robinson said, gravely, "because I was only told of a haunting last night. I'll tell you about it.

"A drummer[1] I know was cycling along the road to the Zoological Gardens last night, when a man darted across the road in front of him. The drummer swerved to one side to avoid a collision, and then turned round to swear at the man. To his

[1] American for "commercial traveller."

utter amazement, however, no man was to be seen. There was just a bare expanse of level moonlit road with no one on it, and there was no place at hand where anyone could possibly have hidden. My friend, the drummer, didn't know what to make of it, whether to attribute it to an hallucination or a delusion, or to believe that he had really encountered some visitant from another world. He rode on to his destination, did what he had to do there, and returned by the same route; and precisely in the same spot the same thing happened. A man suddenly darted across the road in front of him. He swerved aside to avoid him, and on looking round he saw the man had vanished. This time, my friend, the drummer, was scared. He felt certain that what he had seen was neither a delusion nor a hallucination but a real ghost, and he pedalled along that road faster than he had ever pedalled before.

"He is staying," Robinson added, "at an hotel not very far from yours, and when he mentioned the incident to the 'boss,' he said, 'Oh, that was the ghost. It has been seen there by quite a lot of people.'"

Robinson drove me to the haunted spot that evening in his buggy, and when we were within a few yards of it the horse shied, and he had some difficulty in getting it to go on. I saw nothing, although for a few seconds I experienced a distinctly uncanny sensation, which, of course, may have been due to nerves or to the behaviour of the horse, for, as I have remarked elsewhere, there is nothing more infectious than fear. I stayed in Denver several days after this, and then continued my journey by the Denver and Rio Grande Railway.

In the desert, *en route*, the engine broke down, and while we were waiting for another, I had ample opportunity for studying the vista. And, to me, what a strange vista it was ! A great stretch of white sandy soil, with black rocks, just like the rocks on the seashore, showing here and there. Indeed, if the American geologists are to be believed, the sea did once have a home there, and I could well imagine it was so, as I stood gazing—or, to be more truthful, staring in mute, and open-mouthed astonishment—around me.

Presently, I took to watching, with keen appreciation, pretty and harmless creatures not unlike rabbits —I afterwards learned they were prairie dogs—darting in and out their holes, and a little later, merely for the sake of doing something, I thoughtlessly turned over a small piece of rock with my foot and thereby disturbed an enormous centipede at least seven or eight inches in length. It was gone like a flash of lightning, but all the same I sprang back, as if I had been shot, into the arms of a well-seasoned American, who, conscious of his superior knowledge and experience, had been watching the affair with no little interest and amusement.

" Gee, they aren't anything to be afraid of," he remarked with a grin, " wait till you see a rattler."

Well, I saw many rattlers and other noxious reptiles, too, but my horror of them, compared with my horror of that centipede, was as nothing. When I think of the creature, now, and recall the sight of its long scaly body and superfluity of legs, its waving antennæ and cruel nippers, I declare that even after all these years my flesh creeps and I can't help

shuddering. Needless to say, I took very good care to let all the other stones around me alone.

In due course the new engine arrived and took us on to Ogden. I put up there at a quaint-looking inn called "The Windsor," and on the morning after my arrival, I heard a great babel of voices in the bedroom next to mine, the dividing wall, apparently, being very thin. From what I could gather, for the inmates of the room were speaking in French, and I am by no means a good French scholar, two women were accusing a man of having deceived them in some way or another, and the dispute, which was accompanied by an occasional outburst of weeping and many swear-words, at length became so violent that I felt it my bounden duty, as became an Irishman, to interfere. Accordingly, I went to the door of the room and rapped loudly. In an instant there was silence. I rapped again, and this time the door was opened by a foreign-looking man, whose dapper appearance was somewhat spoiled by the marks of finger nails on both cheeks. He had evidently been, to use a vulgarism, "catching it hot."

"Vell, who are you, sir?" he demanded, "and what do you want?"

I was trying to explain that I was a detective, one of the then celebrated Pinkerton's men, sent from New York especially to track him (I had lately been reading "Shadowed by Three" and other American thrillers), when the landlord of the hotel appeared on the scene, and told me it was all right and that he would enquire into the disturbance. As the landlord appeared to be a very decent fellow, and it was certainly more his business than mine, I retired,

rather ignominously, feeling that now my bluff would be doubtless recognized as such, into my own room and there awaited results. I never knew the ins and outs of the case, but on enquiry I was told by one of the employés at the inn that the dapper Frenchman was a white slave trafficker, and that he was trying to decoy two French girls to China-town, in Francisco. My informant said this sort of thing was done often, sums of money being paid by real Chinamen in that city for pretty European girls. On this occasion, I gathered, the trafficker failed, and the two girls were promptly sent back to France and restored to their parents. At this inn, with regard to my fellow guests, I seem to have been somewhat unlucky. On the night before I was to resume my journey westward, I had been discussing the problem of life beyond the grave and ghosts with those seated with me in the lounge, and noticed that two of them, who said little, kept exchanging glances with each other. Well, in due course I went to bed, but I had not laid down for long when I heard a tapping at the window. I sat up at once and received a pretty big shock, for pressed against the window-pane was a death's head, in other words a skeleton face, and as I stared at it transfixed with terror it seemed to grin.

Then, suddenly, a loud barking and savage growling of dogs was heard and the face immediately disappeared. Jumping out of bed I ran to the window and at once discovered what had happened. Someone had been trying to frighten me, but, owing to the intervention of a couple of excellent house-dogs, had himself received the fright

of his life. The trickster, in fact, hoist with his own petard, was badly bitten in the leg, and although, I admit, I was for the moment badly scared, I recovered quickly, and in so doing could give the scarer points. He failed to put in an appearance at breakfast, having spent the night, I was told, doctoring his wound, and, presumably, he was still confined to his room when I left the inn later on in the day, for he was nowhere to be seen. Certainly he and his friend (with whom he had exchanged glances) were not amongst those who had assembled on the doorstep to wish me *bon voyage*.

CHAPTER XIII

WITH THE UNKNOWN IN SAN FRANCISCO

The strike was by no means over. From Ogden to Sacramento, I believe, I was the only civilian on the train, and I was warned when starting on this journey that we might be attacked at any time and the train either derailed or set on fire. Hence, I was told, if I travelled by it I must do so entirely at my own risk. At that period the U.S. soldiers—at least all those whom I saw—wore sky-blue uniforms and either wide brimmed felt hats or small hats something after the pattern of the hat worn in the French Army in the sixties and seventies of the last century.

I found them very friendly and entertaining, and was sorely tempted to take their advice and enlist. They struck me as being much more refined and better educated than the English Tommy of that period. Nothing like so wooden and stocky. The British Tommy, of course, no longer deserves these epithets, having improved wonderfully in recent years. The soldier sitting opposite me was a German by birth, a slim young fellow with yellow hair and blue eyes; and when he talked with tears in his eyes of his Fatherland and the dear ones he had left at home, I felt that a bond of sympathy united us, for I, too, was a stranger in a strange land, and like him often felt very homesick. What a horrible

thing homesickness is! I remember having it terribly when I first went to a boarding school. I had no parents then, for I lost them both before I was nine, but visions of the kindly face of my old nurse and the cosy fireside I had left, and all my books and toys came forcibly back to me, as the cab that had bore me to my destination drove away and I found myself surrounded by a crowd of young, teasing, if not actually bullying boys. I admit freely that when the lights in the dormitory were turned out that first night and I knew that the other boys could not see me, I gave way to an unrestrained, albeit silent, fit of weeping. I would have given my very soul for just one peep of home. It was so, when I went as a term pupil to Scotland, and it was so, at least at times, during this my first trip across America. I did not weep, but I felt painfully and horribly lonely. The young German was not popular with his mates, and they told me the reason. It was sausages and sauerkraut. They said he was always talking of food, particularly sausages and sauerkraut, and it struck them as extremely piggish. Most of them were of Irish extraction, and they were all very proud of the flag under which they served. "It's a gentleman's life," they kept telling me, "good living, good pay, and on the whole very good treatment," and I must say they looked happy. The sense of discipline apparent in the American Army then was very different from that in the English Army, for, when the train stopped at a depôt, it was no uncommon sight to see an officer and a private strolling about together, often arm-in-arm, on terms of the greatest intimacy. However, the general *morale* of the American Army apparently

suffered no ill from such familiarity between officers and men, and this, I think, may be accounted for by the system of education that prevails in the United States. Out West—and I believe it is the same in many districts in the centre and East—the children of the rich and the poor go to the same school, do their lessons in the same classroom and enjoy the same education. No distinction between them is made by their teachers and consequently, unaware of any class barrier, they form friendships with each other which last a lifetime.

It is no uncommon thing, or, at any rate, it was no uncommon thing when I was in the States, to see a successful judge or affluent business man hobnobbing with an ordinary mechanic or tram conductor, the explanation of such conduct lying in the fact that they were old schoolmates. Poverty was, and, perhaps, still is, no bar to friendships in the States, though, as in England and elsewhere, it not infrequently closed the door to marriage. A wealthy attorney would meet and greet an old school friend with unfeigned pleasure, no matter how "out-at-elbow" and "down-at-heel" the latter might be; but should this same school friend wish to marry one of his daughters, his grin of delight would vanish and that speedily. It is, and ever has been, the same all the world over; the curse of poverty (or is it of wealth) may be modified, but it cannot be completely eradicated.

To continue, somewhere between Ogden and Sacramento the strikers fired several shots at us, fortunately, however, without injuring anyone. Shortly afterwards we reached a depôt, where the soldiers all detrained. There was a wide open space outside

the depôt and in this a large number of strikers were assembled, some armed with rifles and revolvers and others with sticks and stones. However, the sight of a Gatling gun proved too much for them, and they sullenly dispersed without showing any fight. The rest of the journey to Sacramento proved uneventful, saving for a little incident arising from my disinclination to play cards. After the soldiers had left the train at the depôt where the scene with the strikers took place, three civilians entered my car and sat some little way off me. For a while they conversed together in low tones and then rising from their seats, they all three came up to me and asked if I would join them in a hand of cards. Not liking their appearance—they were very flashily dressed—I declined, whereupon they grew very angry, and at length became so threatening that I drew my revolver.

How it would have ended I do not know, for I have no doubt they all carried firearms, but providentially—at least providentially for me—just at that moment the conductor of the car appeared on the scene and I at once appealed to him. He was a big, burly fellow, and the three cardplayers, apparently not liking him, slunk back to their seats, and for the remainder of the journey I was left in peace.

Oh, the heat of Sacramento! I have never felt anything like it. I cannot imagine any place in the States could be much hotter. The second day of my stay there I went into a general store and asked for some suspenders. The assistant showed me several. "Are they strong?" I enquired. "I reckon so," he said with a grin, "they held Jimmy Dunn, and he weighed 180 lbs." I asked him who Jimmy

Dunn was, and he replied, "Why, that feller who hanged himself last night with a pair of our suspenders, a pair like these. It's the biggest advertisement we have ever had."

I bought a pair, and I still have them.

While I was in Sacramento, I made many enquiries about hauntings, but could only hear of one case. It is amazing, but I won't vouch for its authenticity.

A visitor in the town turned one evening into a barber's for a shave. It was a poky, gloomy little place, and there was no one in it but the barber. The latter made no reply when the visitor said what he wanted, but merely signalled to him to be seated. Directly the operation was over the barber went into an inner room. A minute later a different barber came out of the room and approaching the visitor asked him if he wanted a hair cut or a shave. "Why, what the devil do you mean?" the visitor cried. "I have just been shaved."

"You have!" the barber exclaimed. "Do you mind describing the person who shaved you?"

The visitor did so, whereupon the barber, turning very pale, cried out, "Good God, that was the ghost of my predecessor, old Ed. Wells. You may thank your lucky stars that you showed no sign of nervousness whilst he was shaving you, for had you done so, in all probability, you'd be a ghost yourself now."

On leaving Sacramento, I pushed on to San Francisco and put up at the International Hotel in Kearney Street. That was some years before the great fire and earthquake, when San Francisco was a different place from what it is now.

How I adored it! No place I have been to since

has fascinated me anything like as much. I had expected to see everywhere the powerful evidences of Western modernity so characteristic, I had been told, of new Eastern towns. I was agreeably surprised. The business part of the city had a distinct look of age. It was paved with cobble-stones, and the greyness and gloom that is characteristic of ancient European cities enveloped it.

As I stood in the lower part of Market Street, and gazed at the dark begrimed stores and offices all around me, I might easily have imagined myself in some old English coastal town or continental city. The antiquity of the West with all the atmosphere of the East, combined to produce an atmosphere that fascinated by reason of its mysticism. It was the hidden and mysterious something in it that was so indescribably thrilling and alluring. I felt it at each step I took, impregnating the very air I breathed. At the same time, I felt more lonely, I think, than I had done either in Denver, New York, or even Chicago. At night, I wandered about the streets and usually found myself in or close to the Chinese quarter—Chinatown as it is popularly styled—before I had finished. By dint of a bribe, I prevailed upon a good-natured Chinaman to pilot me over a few of those subterranean haunts that have so often furnished writers with a theme. I saw men and women dancing, men and women smoking, men and women playing cards and other games, and men and women under the influence of opium. They were lying on divans, and in bunks, and all kinds of queer places, and they all looked pretty much alike, very stupid, very unhealthy and very dirty. The air was foul and fetid, I don't think

anyone but a Chinaman could have stood it for very long. My guide told me, with considerable pride, that some of the underground precincts, which were barred to visitors, were infinitely more luxurious than those he was now showing me. Well, I do not know what his idea of luxury was, but, according to mine, there were no signs of it at all in any of the underground places I had seen. They were indescribably dirty, and although some of the furniture and upholstery had probably cost a good deal of money when new, it was now very dilapidated and simply snowed under with soiled and tawdry cushions and covers, etc., in every stage of decay. However, despite all this, some of the Chinese women were not unprepossessing; indeed one or two of them were downright attractive. I lay special emphasis on two, because hitherto I had had all the Westerner's prejudices against the yellow races, and supposed they were all moulded on the same pattern of what I considered them to be, unqualified ugliness.

The modification of my views may be said to have begun with this, my first visit to Chinatown. I was particularly struck with the beautiful teeth and hands of one girl. She was tall and slim, with eyes set rather straighter, that is to say, rather less oblique, than most of her race, and her cheek-bones were not so pronounced. She had a very prettily moulded mouth, and her teeth were, I think, the most perfect I have ever seen, and that is saying a good deal, for the modern English girl, not infrequently, has very good teeth. Her hands were very white, the fingers long and tapering, and the nails an exquisite filbert and much manicured. At that date manicure

was much more generally practised in the United States towns than it was in England, and the ladies of the yellow races, as well as those of the white, took a very considerable pride in their well-kept fingertips.

I asked my guide whether there was any truth in the many stories I had heard of the white slave traffic in underground Chinatown and of the kidnapping of American and European girls for that purpose, and he gave a significant nod. He told me he could only show me a strictly limited portion of the underground world, that portion which was comparatively safe to strangers, and led me to infer that what I saw was very mild indeed compared with what went on in the quarters that were rigidly barred to all strangers.

"Is it a matter of dollars?" I said.

"No," he replied, shaking his big, fat, well-oiled head. "No amount of money, not even all the money in the bank of San Francisco, will admit you there."

"But how about the police?" I asked. "They can't be kept out."

He said nothing, but shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

I must confess I was not altogether sorry to quit the subterranean world and find myself once again in the open street. I do not think any air ever smelt sweeter to anyone than did that cool night breeze to me after my several hours sojourn in fetid Chinatown.

During my stay in San Francisco, I made the acquaintance of several city men, but I cannot say I found them particularly sociable. Californian business men, and it is much the same, I believe,

with business men all over the States, are not very communicative even among themselves. On the contrary, they are invariably brief. If they should meet a friend in the street, they will take him into their club or a restaurant and say, " What's yours ? " The friend, perhaps, replies, " Two cocktails." (I am talking, of course, of a time when America was " wet," " very wet," and bars were almost as plentiful as tooth-picks.) Bang ! A dollar is thrown on the counter. The business man says, " Here's luck," or " Cheerio ! " The contents of two glasses disappear with lightning rapidity down two throats, and in a trice the two men are once more outside the building in the street. The business man raps out a word or two relative to business, says " Au revoir," and hurries off. The whole thing is a matter at the most of five or ten minutes.

Even in their clubs, I never saw the San Franciscan chatty. They hurried in at midday, glanced through their letters, nodded automatically to various of their acquaintances, gobbled down their luncheon, perhaps smoked a cigar, and then hurried out again. I do not suppose they exchanged more than half a dozen sentences at the most with anyone ; and those sentences invariably related to their business. I was told it was pretty much the same at dances and the theatre. The business men always took their pleasure as a matter of duty, something that had to be endured. They rarely smiled, and if not looking actually bored, showed no signs whatever of real enjoyment.

I wondered at first whether this obvious lack of enjoyment on their part was due to shyness, but I eventually concluded that it was not, and was

solely due to the fact that they had no interest whatever outside their store, or office, and home. I put store and office first, because I believe from what I learned, that in most cases the San Franciscan men concentrated more on their business than on their own fireside, albeit they enjoyed the reputation of making good husbands and excellent fathers. At that date the "Chollie" and "Johnnie," with the high, stand-up collar, great show of shirt cuff, and "waist," was much in evidence in London and other English towns, but I saw none of that breed in San Francisco. The San Franciscan male was essentially manly. With his mind centred on his work, he would have scorned to parade the streets or spend his time posing for effect in the company of ladies. I was told he was never to be seen even at afternoon teas, and if ever he went to any social function, it was always as a matter of duty and never to flirt or frivol. This might lead one to suppose that the San Franciscan of this epoch was a bit of a prig; but I saw enough of him during my various sojournings in his city to know that he was not priggish, but just a practical, hard-headed fellow, generally straight and honourable, and in a large measure made up of grit and determination. If he had a fault, it was that he entirely lacked imagination, and that made him appear to an outsider like myself extremely dull and uninteresting. I asked several San Francisco business men that I met at the International if they knew of any hauntings in the city, but the reply I invariably got was to this effect: "Hauntings! Yes, worse luck, I, myself, am haunting a fellow in D Street. He owes me fifty dollars, and I shall haunt him till I get it."

So in the end I gave up making enquiries in that quarter. However, I was more successful in another quarter.

A sailor named Harding, the captain of a trader whom I also met at the International, told me several tales of queer happenings, all of which he assured me were absolutely true. Among them was the well known case of the "Squando." Some years previously, he said, a shocking tragedy occurred on board the "Squando," a Norwegian vessel, which was lying in San Francisco harbour. The captain and his wife, for some reason or another, had conceived a strong antipathy to the first mate, and one day they murdered him between them. They first of all plied him with drink, and then when he was too intoxicated to defend himself, the woman held his arms, while her husband beheaded him with an axe. They then heaved the body overboard, and it was afterwards found floating in the harbour. Harding said he had met the murderers on several occasions, and he described the woman as goodish-looking, but with very hard eyes. He said he believed (from the impression he got of her) that she and the mate had been "carrying on" together, and that when she feared they would be found out, she rounded on him and pretended to the husband that it was all the mate's fault, that he had, in fact, been persistently annoying her.

Soon after the murder, Harding went on, the "Squando" witnessed another tragedy. While at sea the crew mutinied and killed the new captain. The cause of the mutiny was never made very clear, but there seems to be little doubt that it originated in words with the captain over certain

happenings on board, which the sailors associated with the murder of the mate on the previous voyage. Anyhow, after this second tragedy, the " Squando " acquired a very sinister reputation, and this reputation was enhanced when the two succeeding captains each died under what were considered very mysterious circumstances. In fact, after the death of the second of these captains, the crew openly declared the vessel was haunted, and on reaching Bathhurst landed, and refused to return to her.

Several local seamen were then engaged by the Norwegian Consul to act as watchmen on board the " Squando," but a single night on her was quite enough for them. They declared they had seen a headless man stamping up and down the stairways and decks, and that handspikes and various other articles had been hurled about by some invisible agency. Other watchmen that were subsequently procured told the same tale, and in the end the " Squando " was abandoned.

" I was never on board her," Harding added, " so I have no personal experience of the haunting, but I did once see a ghost in San Francisco harbour. I was rowing ashore in a boat when I suddenly saw a hand rise out of the water close beside me. It was a woman's hand, judging by the smallness and whiteness of it, and the fingers kept clawing the air, so," and he imitated the action to show me what he meant. " Thinking it was a drowning person, I leaned over the gunnel of the boat and made a grab at the hand. To my astonishment, however, I touched nothing. A few minutes later, I saw the hand on the other side of the boat, and when I again tried to seize it the same thing happened. Not

knowing what to make of it, I rowed as fast as I could, for I admit I was scared, and on reaching shore told one of the local boatmen there, a fellow called José, what I had seen.

"Why! It's the ghost of that woman who was drowned in the harbour a short while ago," he said. "I've seen it, too, and so have other boys."

All the while Captain Harding was relating this latter story, a solemn-looking, dark-eyed man had been listening most attentively.

"So you are interested in strange things," he said, as soon as Harding had finished. "I can show you something in Golden Gate Park that licks me. Will you come with me and see it?"

I said I would, and the following afternoon he took me there.

San Franciscans may well have been proud of their Park. Though very new and entirely lacking in that abundance of foliage that is so pleasing and conspicuous a feature of our London parks and commons, Golden Park was for all that very beautiful. Wherever one looked a blaze of colour met the eye, and my companion, who, by the way, was a Swede called Ström, informed me that there was here no dead season because, owing to the wonderful climate, blossoms of all kinds were "out" all the year round. The Golden Gate Park is so large, that I only had time to see a few of the wonders it contains. I could hardly believe that the Huntingdon Cascade, which is one of its most conspicuous and beautiful features, had been so short a time in existence; its setting was so natural and picturesque. To make a cascade of that height a more than ordinary knowledge of engineering would be required,

therefore a word or two regarding its construction may be of some interest.

The soil being mostly sand, many experts deemed it impossible to construct a permanent cascade and watercourse in that part of the Park. However, this was not the opinion of Superintendent McLaren, who, although failure was prophesied, undertook to carry out the scheme. In order to construct the cascade, he sank concrete nine feet in the sand and threw out at intervals bracing concrete crags. This insured permanency. The rest of his task was comparatively easy, and eventually he had the satisfaction of seeing the water rush along the artificial causeway and over the rocks, forming the cascade, as naturally as if Dame Nature herself had arranged it. All that was needed now to make this artificial waterfall one of the most beautiful ever constructed were some tropical flowers and shrubs, and these being quickly procured, a most realistic reproduction of natural scenery was completed. The cost of the whole thing amounted to about 25,000 dollars.

After we had stood for a while on the wooden bridge spanning the summit of the cascade, Ström took me to a level piece of ground some little distance away from it.

"Do you feel anything peculiar here?" he asked.

"I feel rather colder," I replied.

"Rather colder!" he repeated, and his teeth chattered. "I feel icy cold. No mattter how warm the day, whenever I stand here at this hour, I shiver." And shiver he certainly did.

"Do you see anything?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"Not there?" he asked, pointing to the ground.

I looked where he indicated, and saw a shadow, a dark shadow without any particular shape or form. Had there been any clouds overhead, I might have thought, perhaps, that the shadow was due to them, but the sky was uniformly blue, and there was no vestige of a cloud to be seen anywhere.

"Can you explain it?" Ström went on. "It is certainly neither your shadow nor mine, and there is no material object near us to account for it. What is it?"

I looked at it closely, and while I was doing so it disappeared.

"If you come here to-morrow about this time, you will see it again," Ström remarked, "but at no other hour in the day. I have shown it to several people, and not one of them can explain its origin. I am sure it is connected in some way with the icy cold sensation that I get with it, because directly it goes I am warm again. Feel my hand." And he held it out. It was certainly quite warm.

CHAPTER XIV

AN ADVENTURE IN A FAR WESTERN FOREST

I stayed in San Francisco some weeks and then pushed on to my destination in Oregon. The enterprise I embarked on there not proving a success, I returned south by stages. I found the real Far West (I allude to Oregon and North California) a very different place to the Far West of the stories and films. The ranches I saw there were small. I do not think any of them contained more than, perhaps, 700 or 800 acres, and the houses were very plain modern structures. There was nothing whatever of the picturesque about them.

On quite a number of ranches I visited there were no women, just two or three men, who did all the housework, in addition to their work out of doors; and when extra help was needed, say, to get in the harvest both of fruit and grain, they applied to their friends and neighbours, since as regards certain work it was a recognized thing for everyone to help everyone else. At the ranch I was on, I acted for a while as cook. My first attempt was a failure. I kept the potatoes boiling hard for two hours, and at the end of that time found them reduced to a watery mess. However, I soon got into it, for the simple reason that the articles I was called upon to cook were extremely limited. Breakfast at 6 a.m.,

consisted of what was locally known as " mush," a concoction of flour, bacon fat and milk; eggs, sometimes bacon, and tea. For dinner, at about noon, we had either "jerked" beef or bacon, with potatoes, beans or maize (i.e., Indian corn), with tea again.

Supper, at any time between six and seven-thirty, consisted of much the same variety, with the addition of apple pastry and jam.

The bread, which appeared at every meal and was partaken of in chunks, varied, too. One or other of us made it, and sometimes we could break it with our teeth and sometimes we could not. Of such cowboys as, at that time, were depicted in Wild West shows in this country, and which, even now, are to be seen on the films, I never saw one. The ranch hands who drove the cattle to the pasture lands or to the market were clad in the usual ranchmen fashion, that is to say in collar or flannel shirts and blue canvas overalls. None of them wore the wide brimmed felt hat, or the elaborate sheepskin trousers of the film cowboy, or carried an array of revolvers and bowie knives.

In the more mountainous and very lonely regions, where bears and pumas were not unfrequently to be encountered, the majority of men carried a Winchester repeater, but one firearm usually sufficed.

I had a very unpleasant experience on one occasion, when out with a picnic party in the forests of the Cascade Mountains. We had spent the morning cleaning our firearms, in preparation for a nocturnal prowl after some of the more dangerous big game that had their home in those parts but rarely showed themselves in the daytime, and the midday meal

over, we all set off together to gather huckleberries.

For some time we kept together, every now and then stopping to talk and joke, and then, somehow, quite unwittingly, I drifted away from the rest, and wandered on by myself. I did not miss my companions at first, but after a while the silence of the place suddenly forced itself upon me. I then looked sharply round and discovered I was alone. I shouted, but there was no reply, and my voice thus exerted in utter solitude and followed by absolute silence sounded so entirely new and strange to me that it awakened apprehensions of the most harrowing nature. My friends, out of sight and earshot, might be far away in an opposite direction. Supposing I could not find them ! Like a fool, I had taken no notice of landmarks, I had no idea which way I had come or in what direction the camp lay. All around me were giant trees, some probably two hundred feet in height, bushes of all kinds, and patches of dense undergrowth, a configuration which continued uninterruptedly for miles. Indeed, one might wander for days and nights at a stretch without coming to a settlement, or to any kind of human habitation. All this flashed through my mind as I stood there, straining my ears to catch a far-off response to my shouting, and I recalled the many stories I had recently heard round the camp-fire of men who had perished of starvation in the forest, men whose bleached bones were, from time to time, discovered by parties of picknickers similar to ours.

Growing desperate, I ran a little way and shouted again, this time with all the strength and energy I could muster. To my infinite joy I fancied I heard

a faint, a very faint, reply. I started off at full speed in the direction from which I thought the voice came, and was eagerly and impatiently forcing my way through the brushwood, when I suddenly experienced a sensation of falling, of plunging violently downward into space. Then there was a crash, and immediately everything became a blank. On coming to, I found myself lying on the rocky bottom of a deep hole or pit, the sides of which were overgrown with the rankest of rank vegetation. That I must have lain there some long time was obvious, for whereas it was still bright daylight when I had fallen, the sky had now paled to a very considerable extent and there was no longer any glare. I tried to move, and after several efforts managed to rise to my feet. But the relief I experienced that none of my bones were broken, and that beyond a few bruises and stiffness I was none the worse for my fall, was considerably marred by the difficult problem in front of me. How was I to get out of the hole? It was about ten feet deep, and the sides sheer precipices without any apparent foothold. At last, however, after searching for some considerably time, I espied a series of fissues or crevices in the rock, which I believed would afford me a foothold, and I was about to try it, when I saw something in one of the crevices, which gave me a decidedly unpleasant thrill. It was the flat and scaly head of a snake, most probably a rattler. That settled me, and I looked round for some safter place to negotiate.

The sight of a yellow and black snake, this time without doubt a rattler, slowly emerging from a hole in the ground, close to me, urged me on, and at

length espying a spot from which I thought it just possible to make the ascent, I finally succeeded, after many falls, and more bruises and scratches, in climbing out of the horrible place.

The evening was now well advanced, and the shadows from the great trees and bushes lay thick on the ground all around me. Overhead, a glorious full moon shone resplendently amid myriads of scintillating stars. All this was undoubtedly beautiful, but on this occasion I confess beauty left me cold, and the first thing I did on emerging from the hole was to shout again, though I had little hope of being heard. I shouted loudly and fiercely, but there was no reply, only a scrimmaging in the brushwood, as of some animal scared out of its senses, and not knowing which way to go for safety.

I now deliberated what I had better do. Should I go on, on the remote chance of coming across my friends eventually, or should I stay where I was, on the equally remote chance of their coming across me? Ultimately, I decided to stay where I was, at any rate till the morning. Terrifically hot though the summer days are in Western America, the nights are often cold, and it was not long before I caught myself shivering. Fortunately, I had a few matches, and by dint of much blowing and coaxing I at last succeeded in kindling a fire. That, at least, was one consolation, and I should have been tolerably comfortable had I only had a pannikin of hot tea and something to eat, more substantial than huckleberries. As it was, I suffered hunger and thirst, while strange noises seeming to come from the shadows all round me kept me continually on the *qui vive*.

Once a maniacal laugh at my very elbow made me jump almost out of my skin. With a supreme effort to be calm, I turned round, and a fluttering in the foliage of a tree close to me suggested that it was merely an owl or eagle, probably the latter. A few minutes later, a dark form darted across the moonlit space opposite me, and disappeared amid the shadows of the trees. That, however, was only a coyote. Coyotes swarm in the woods and mountains of Western Canada and the United States, and though, as a rule, harmless enough and very shy of human beings, they may, when pressed with hunger and in packs, become dangerous. I have met settlers who have told me they have been chased occasionally by large packs of coyotes in the dead of winter and have narrowly escaped being overtaken and perhaps killed.

In my case, however, there was nothing to fear, and the sight of this odd one only interested me. The minutes sped by again uneventfully, and the fire having got very low, I was about to replenish it, when I suddenly saw two glimmering lights in the gloom of the trees. They were too large and high up to be glowworms, and I was wondering what on earth they could be, when they suddenly moved, and I realized that they were the eyes of some wild animal. Obeying an impulse I bent down and picking up a smouldering piece of wood flung it as far as possible in the direction of the eyes. There was a low growl, a violent shaking of leaves and branches, and the eyes vanished. A few minutes later, from some little distance off, came a wild, unearthly scream, which I knew at once to be that of a cougar, or, as it is often styled in America, moun-

tain lion—in the Zoological Gardens in this country it is labelled puma—so that I came to the conclusion that it was, in all probability, that animal that had been taking a quiet peep at me. Cougars, like coyotes, haunt the forests and mountains of America, but, as a rule, saving when very pressed with hunger, they do not molest men. Unlike various other species of the big cat tribe, the tiger and jaguar, for instance, cougars usually offer no resistance on being cornered, but, on the contrary, not infrequently shed tears and appear grief-stricken, their behaviour on these occasions being almost human. I had often heard all this, and, doubtless, to some people the remembrance of it would have been assuring; but being naturally of a rather sceptical turn of mind and not inclined to believe quite all I hear, I very much wished I had a Winchester repeater or some other weapon, and for a long time I crouched over the fire feeling that the cougar was not very far off, and only biding an opportunity to make a meal of me. All was now very still, the sepulchral silence being broken only by the gentle rustling of the foliage, as the night breeze stole down from the mountain heights.

Then, suddenly, there was a hoarse cry, and it came so unexpectedly that my heart nearly jumped out of my body. It took me some time, indeed, to reassure myself that what I had heard was only the cry of a great water toad that had taken it into its head to flop abruptly into a pool of water. The cries of these things are often very loud and ghastly. More silence, then crashing of brushwood, and two creatures, whose forms I had not time to recognize, so quick was their flight, dashed past the fire, the

one in hot pursuit of the other. A few moments later, and a wail of agony that died away in a kind of half-sob, half-gurgle, told me that one of those tragedies of animal life, that are of nightly occurrence in the forests, had just taken place.

At last, during another prolonged hush, worn out, I gradually fell into a doze, and owing, perhaps, to my imagination having been excited by the various thrills I had received, I dreamed a grizzly bear was after me. I knew it was gaining on me, I could hear its howls growing more and more distinct. There is a point of agony at which all dreaming must end. I therefore awoke with a start, and found myself bathed in a cold sweat, a prey to a sense of terror, that I could not account for. Instead of the cheerful blaze that I had seen ere I fell asleep, the fire had now sunk to a heap of red embers, and all was cold and dark. Suddenly, there was a rustling among the brushwood, and as I sat up in a great state of panic and looked around, a dark form emerged from the bushes and confronted me. It was so silent, so absolutely automatic in all its movements, that I thought at first it was a ghost, and a cold shiver ran down my spine.

However, on pulling myself together, not, I admit without a desperate effort, and studying it further, I came to the conclusion it was human enough, merely a Red Indian, probably from some Indian Reservation near at hand. Quite unlike the Indian depicted in the films, that is to say the tall warrior with the flashing eagle eyes, waving plumes and tomahawk, he was a squat, flat faced, high cheek-boned individual, clad in a dirty-looking shirt and ragged American overalls. A thoroughly unpre-

possessing customer, but, I devoutly hoped, harmless. Overjoyed, I was about to address him and solicit his aid in searching for my companions, when, without saying a word, he suddenly turned on his heels and disappeared among the bushes. I called after him and ran to the spot where he had vanished, but he was nowhere in sight, and in my despair at once again being left alone, I shouted myself hoarse ; however, it was of no avail, there was no reply, only the most intense and emphatic silence.

My misery was now indescribable. The fire was out, and I had no means of rekindling it, as I had used the last of my slender store of matches. Consequently, I was half perished with the cold, added to which I was ravenously hungry and thirsty. But worst of all, worse than all the physical suffering I now endured, was the mental torment caused by the terrible realization that I was lost, and dread surmise of my impending fate. Was I to go on getting more and more hungry and thirsty, till by slow stages of prolonged agony I finally perished, or would my end be precipitated by the acute nocturnal cold or a grizzly bear ? My situation was without doubt desperate, and I was deliberating once again what course to pursue, whether to move in the almost vain hope of coming across my friends, or to remain where I was rather than risk wandering further from them, when something touched me on the shoulder. Fully prepared to see either a Red Indian or a bear, I swung round fearfully, but to my indescribable joy and astonishment it was a member of our party, one Smith. Like the sagacious fellow he was, he had gone to the Indian Settlement to learn news of me, and on hearing there from the

Indian who had scared me so that a white man was close at hand, he had followed the directions given him and found me. Thus, I was saved from what might have proved an extremely unpleasant termination to my career.

I had a different experience one night when riding over a desert (out West, where I was, any place that was at all barren was styled a desert). My horse suddenly shied, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could induce it to go on. We were close to a solitary tree at the time, and I concluded that it was the dark shadow of the tree waving to and fro on the moonlit soil that had startled the animal. The following night the same thing happened. I passed by the same tree and my horse shied, and on glancing at the tree this time I saw something queer squatting on the ground under it. The thing was too vague and shadowy for me to be able to define it with any degree of accuracy, but I got the impression that it was nude, half-human, and half-animal, a very grotesque combination of both in fact, and wholly malevolent. I could feel it looking at me with an expression of the most intense animosity.

After I had left the tree some little way behind, I turned in my saddle and glanced back. The thing was now standing in the open, apparently staring after me. It looked at least seven feet high. More, I hadn't time to observe, for my horse kept momentarily increasing its speed, and not being a good rider, it was all I could do to maintain my seat.

On reaching home—when I say "home" I mean the ranch where I was temporarily billeted—I mentioned the incident to the people there, and one of them, an Austrian named Schneider, at once

said, " That was the suicide tree. Several men have hanged themselves from it, within the last few years, and no horse ever passes it without shying."

I asked him if it was known to be haunted, and he replied, " Some people say it is, but for my own part I don't believe there are such things as ghosts."

" Why not ? " I said. " I am quite certain the thing I and the horse saw to-night was a ghost. What else could it have been ! "

The Red Indians, with whom I had several interesting talks about ghosts, told me the Cascade Mountains were full of hauntings, and that all kinds of phenomena were seen and heard at times on the cliffs overlooking Crater Lake and in the caves of the great lava beds. Their account of one of these hauntings was as follows :

An Indian called Pete was crossing the lava district one evening when he heard something approach him from behind, and the next moment he was conscious of it jumping right over him. As it alighted on the ground just in front of him, he saw it very distinctly ; and he said he could only compare it to a monstrous toad. It disappeared at the entrance to one of the caves. People who went into that cave, he said, often disappeared and were never seen again, and it was supposed that the toadish thing he had seen and which many other Indians had seen, too, had the power to spirit them away.

Another Indian informed me that in former days it was the custom of the Rogue River Indians to offer human sacrifices to the supernatural beings that were known to haunt Crater Lake. The mode of

sacrifice was similar to that practised in olden times on the shores of Niagara and was simplicity itself.

The victims were taken to the edge of the cliffs overlooking the water and merely pushed over. My informant said that on certain nights of the year the tragedies were re-enacted, and that not only were harrowing screams heard, but that the ghosts of the victims could be seen plunging through the air. From what I gathered, most of the hauntings in the Cascade and Rocky Mountains were of the elemental and animal order. Horse and bear ghosts seemed to be by no means uncommon. With regard to animals and a hereafter, most of the Indians I met believed they were every whit as much entitled to a future existence as human beings, and cited innumerable cases to prove that when animals die, their spirits, especially if the said animals come to an untimely end, return to earth to haunt the scenes of their old activities. I was pointed out a ford at a river, which an old Indian assured me was periodically haunted by a whole troop of phantom horses. He said he had often seen them there on moonlight nights. They came swooping down from the hills, and crossing the ford disappeared in the woods beyond.

He said they were always increasing in number, because directly a horse in the locality died, its spirit joined them. In years gone by, he told me, it was the custom for an Indian warrior to be buried with his favourite horse, so that he would be able to ride it again in the spirit world. The ghosts of these warriors of old mounted on their phantom chargers were, according to him, often to be en-

countered at night in the more lonely parts of the deserts and forests.

Other Indians stated as a fact that certain of the rivers and streams in the Cascade and Rocky Mountains were haunted by a species of female ghosts, usually either of a copperish or black hue, seldom white, that, like the English North Country "Peg Powler" and the German Lorelei, took a particular pleasure in luring those of the male sex who were romantically inclined to their doom.

They were often to be seen at night time sitting on rocks close to some whirlpool or rapid, and woe-betide the youth who, smitten with their charms, for they were always beautiful, tried to swim or row out to them. He was invariably drowned.

A case that was thus fatal, I was told, had happened only a short time ago. Two Indians were returning home through the forest one night, when a terrific storm arose and, owing to the darkness that had fallen, they lost the track.

While they were groping about, trying to find it, they suddenly saw a light ahead and a voice called out in Indian, "It's all right. Follow me." They did so, and presently found themselves on the bank of a rushing, roaring river. The elder of the two plunged in, before he could check himself, and was immediately swept out of sight and drowned. The younger drew back just in time, and as he did so there was a loud burst of laughter, and he saw a beautiful girl, holding a light in one hand, standing on a rock in the middle of the river, mocking him.

CHAPTER XV

QUEER EXPERIENCES IN A NEW YORK HOTEL

When I gave up ranch work I tried free-lance journalism for a short time in San Francisco, and then travelling back again across the States, and staying for a while in Denver and St. Louis, I finally arrived once again in New York. As funds were low, Broadway was out of the question, so I hunted for quarters instead in the vicinity of West Quay, and eventually alighted on a fifty cent a night hotel kept by a Hungarian, whom I will call Kalowski, which is not his correct name—that I could never pronounce properly—but something like it. He was a merry fellow, and having apparently taken a fancy to me, he would often sit on the rickety little table in my room, strumming on a guitar, and singing some gay Hungarian ditty, leaving off, every now and again, to tell me some droll story. At the same time, underlying all that merriment, was a well of sadness. I suspected as much when I caught him looking at a photograph one day, the photograph of a girl in fancy dress. Her beauty was so great that I could not refrain from commenting on it.

"Yes," my landlord said, and his voice sounded very sad and far away. "She was pretty, was my Jeannette."

"Your sister?" I hazarded.

"No," he replied, "my sweetheart. Would you like to hear about her? It's not a cheerful story, but I don't mind telling it to you, if you'd really like to hear it."

"I would if it doesn't upset you too much," I said.

My landlord sighed.

"Her name was Jeannette Stuttgart," he began. "She was born in New York, but her parents were German and came here from Munich about thirty years ago. She was a pronounced blonde, with very flaxen hair, blue eyes, and a rather *retroussé* nose. She was tall and slender, and when I first saw her"—here there was a slight catch in his voice—"she was dancing in vaudeville in Broadway. On my part it was a case of love at first sight, and I went night after night to the theatre, and hung about the stage door, both before and after the performances, merely to get a fleeting glimpse of her. By a stroke of luck I discovered she knew an acquaintance of mine, a man named Bergsen, and it was through him that I eventually got an introduction to her.

"To be brief, after knowing one another for a little over a year, we became engaged.

"Well, all went smoothly, and we had only just fixed the day for our marriage, when the blow fell. I went one evening, as usual, to the theatre where she was acting to escort her home, and was informed by the stage doorkeeper that she had already gone."

"'Gone!' I ejaculated. 'That's impossible; she always waits till I come. Have the goodness to go to her room and tell her I'm here.'

"The man—he was a fat German—shrugged his shoulders.

" ' No, no good,' he said, 'I tell you she's gone. She went off with a lady a few minutes before you arrived. You came a bit late to-night.'

" ' I know I did,' I said, ' nearly ten minutes. I couldn't help it. Who was the lady ? '

" ' I don't know,' the doorkeeper replied, ' she was a stranger to me.'

" ' What was she like ? ' I asked again.

" ' Tall and slight. I couldn't see her face because she was wearing a veil, but she wasn't a German.'

" ' You don't know where they went ? '

" The doorkeeper shook his head.

" ' No,' he said, ' I heard them drive off in a carriage that's all.'

" Well," Kalowski continued, " as I could get no further information at the theatre, I set off at once to Jeannette's lodgings. She lived in Chambers Street.

" She was not there, and the landlady didn't know where she was, or the name of her companion. Feeling very much upset and not a little mystified, for Jeannette had never treated me like this before, I went home and wrote a letter to her, asking the meaning of it. I had no reply, and from that day to this her fate has remained a mystery."

" Do you mean to say she disappeared ? " I said.

Kalowski nodded.

" Yes," he said. " Disappearances in New York are common enough. Some thought it was a white slave traffic case ; scores of girls are decoyed and taken to New York's Chinatown every year. Others declared that she had merely eloped with some rich lover."

" And what do you think ? " I said.

" Think ! " Kalowski cried, his voice full of

indignation. "I don't think at all, I'm certain. She was kidnapped. That veiled woman was simply a decoy. I would stake my life and soul that Jeannette loved me. It was not in her to play me false. Had I been a rich man, the police would have left no stone unturned to find her, but being poor and a foreigner they took no trouble. God, it makes me mad"—and Kalowski banged the table he was sitting on with his fist—"to think of the police, the swine! Listen. Night after night I used to haunt the streets in the hope of discovering some clue to her whereabouts, and one night, when I was close to the Bowery, I heard some one tapping at a window and, on looking round, I saw a face pressed against the window-pane of a room on the ground floor of a big private house. It was distorted with fear and agony, but I recognized it instantly, the light from a gas lamp, close to, threw it into strong relief—it was Jeannette's."

"Your lost sweetheart's!" I interrupted.

Kalowski nodded.

"Yes," he said, "she had seen me and was tapping to attract my attention. However, someone—I couldn't see whether it was a man or woman—dragged her back, and the next moment a curtain was drawn across the window. I rushed to the door and hammered on it with all my might, shouting out that unless it was opened, I would break it down.

"Presently, a crowd collected and a cop came up to me and asked me what it was all about. I told him Jeannette Stuttgart, the missing girl, was in the house and begged him to make a forcible entrance.

"He wouldn't do so alone, and when, on the

arrival of the cops whom he had summoned to his assistance, the door was forced and the building entered, it was found to be empty. They looked everywhere, or said they did, and on finding no one, rounded on me, and declared I had imagined it all. But I hadn't. I had seen Jeannette Stuttgart—to that I could swear—or her ghost."

"And you never saw or heard of her again?"

Kalowski shook his head.

"I feel sure she is dead," he said mournfully. "She couldn't and wouldn't live that life for long. No, as spirits we shall meet again, but I shall never see her again in the flesh."

However, despite this deep-seated sadness, Kalowski was not without a sense of humour. He was standing outside his hotel one day—I happened to be within earshot—watching a funeral go by, when a stranger tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Is that the funeral of anyone of note?"

"I reckon it is," Kalowski responded.

"That's interesting," the stranger replied. "Tell me, for I haven't heard, who has died?"

"The gentleman in the coffin," Kalowski answered gravely. "Anything else?"

Again, a very persistent drummer, thinking to be waggish at Kalowski's expense, showed him a tube of patent ointment for healing sores.

"See this, boss," he remarked, "there ain't anything to touch it in all the world. Only the other day I cut off my dog's tail by mistake and ten minutes after I had applied some of this ointment, Jerusalem, if the blowed stump didn't start growing, and in a few days my dog had a new tail!"

Kalowski shrugged his shoulders.

"It ain't nothing to what the ointment I bought last year in Kentucky can do," he replied. "Why, only last night, I cut off my cat's tail by mistake, and after applying some of this Kentucky ointment to the tail I'd cut off, darn me, if a new cat didn't start growing, and now the new cat is so like the old that, darn me, I can't tell which is which."

On another occasion, when I was present in the bar-room the conversation turned on absent-mindedness, and a Hoboken tradesman said, "I reckon when it comes to talking of alienation of mind it couldn't be better exemplified than in the case of the late Thomas Slocum, of Boston. The story goes that one night, on retiring, he undressed, placed his pantaloons carefully between the sheets, and then, throwing himself into an easy chair, went to sleep, under the impression that he was in bed."

"That's not bad," someone else exclaimed, "but I guess my friend Fritz Bach, of Boston, can give him points. What do you think he did one day? Why he went into a post office and having bought a two cent stamp stuck it on the post-mistress's face and put the office inkpot into the post box. What do you think of that, Kalowski?"

"I reckon I think of that just what you might, perhaps, think of this," Kalowski replied. "An uncle of mine, Pete Van de Hellen, who also lives in Boston, called upon a Jew named Echstein, and upon getting up to go, after a long interview, he made a bow to his cane that was standing in a corner, and seizing Echstein by the neck walked off with him under his arm."

Kalowski took me one evening to a free German

music-hall, and although I did not understand a word of German then, I enjoyed the show immensely. As a whole, it was a very pleasant picture—those fair-haired Germans puffing away at their meerschaums, and either lolling back in their seats, brimful of contentment, or leaning forward with their elbows on the table laughing heartily at jokes of the performers. During the intervals, they seemed to enjoy the exchange of good-natured banter with anyone who happened to be sitting near to them, and obviously everyone was very happy and comfortable and thoroughly at home. The acting and singing struck me as poor, but as it was given gratuitously, no one, of course, even had they wished to do so, could legitimately grumble. The management reckoned, of course, to make on the drinks and food, of which I must say every member of the audience appeared to be partaking liberally.

The Bowery was a very tough place. There were streets in it down which no policeman, or "cops" as the Americans call them, cared or even dared to walk alone. Shooting, there, as in the Far West, down Montana way and especially in Texas, was common enough; and every desperado in the Bowery carried knives and firearms, which on the smallest provocation were drawn and used. I narrowly escaped being shot one day, when walking down a street. A fracas of some kind or another was going on in a drinking saloon, and, as I strolled by, a bullet whizzed past my head, certainly within a few inches of it, embedding itself in a wall. Needless to say, I no longer sauntered, but walked on as quickly as possible. New York witnessed an unusually large number of suicides. Some people

think the climate there conductive to suicide, some, the strain of living, and some, a peculiar something in the atmosphere and locality. There was an extensive epidemic of suicide in 1859, when, on one day alone, J. H. Kearney poisoned himself at Frend's Hotel, Henry X. Wood at 152, East 24th Street, and Ed. Cassenbrock shot himself at 81, James' Street. There was a similar epidemic in the seventies, and one about the time of my second visit to the city. Whereas, however, in "the fifties" the New Yorkers seemed to prefer poison, in the nineties they showed a distinct preference for bullets and drowning. Fashion, it would seem, not only determines our mode of dress and diet, but also dictates to us even in the manner of our death.

Before quitting New York, I put up for a week or so at the Cosmopolitan, in Chambers Street, and whilst I was there I had an exceptionally curious experience. I was walking along West Quay one evening with a young Swede, when we noticed a youth standing on the edge of the stonework, gazing intently into the water.

"Strikes me that fellow means to drown himself," the Swede remarked.

"What makes you think so?" I asked.

"His attitude and the way he is looking at the water," the Swede answered. "I'll speak to him."

We then approached the youth, and the Swede, who never wasted words, asked him plump out what was troubling him.

"Everything," was the reply. "I've no money, no home, nothing,"

"Can't you get a job?" I asked.

"No," the youth replied. "I've tried till I'm sick

of trying, and now I'm screwing up courage to jump into the sea and drown."

We both begged him to do nothing of the kind and gave him all we could afford, which was not much, and after he had promised to do nothing rash and to meet us in the same spot at the same time the following day, we left him. Unfortunately, I was unable to keep the appointment, but the Swede told me that he would, and upon meeting him at the Cosmopolitan a few days later, I asked :

" What about that young man we saved from suicide ? Did you see him ? "

" Well, no—not exactly," the Swede replied, " but I saw something that struck me as very strange." He then went on to tell me that when he got to the place where we had arranged to meet, only a curious-looking dog sat there, that kept on staring at him with sad, wistful eyes. He stayed there for at least an hour, hoping that the youth would turn up, and then feeling it was waste of time to wait any longer, he came away, but the dog followed him, and try how he would, he could not get rid of it.

" I took it to my room," he said, " and shut it in, while I went downstairs to buy a few biscuits to give it, and when I returned it was gone. The window, as well as the door, was shut, and as I found, upon making enquiries, that no one had entered my room during my absence—indeed, no one could have done so without my knowledge, as I was away from it barely a minute—the dog's disappearance presents to my mind an absorbing mystery. There is only one possible explanation of it," the Swede added, " and that is that the young

man we thought we had dissuaded from committing suicide did, after all, drown himself, and the dog was his ghost."

It was in New York, where I learned much, that I first became aware of the existence of anti-man societies. It is probably true that America sees the birth of all that is worst as well as all that is best, and I believe that the worst phase of the Feminist movement was born in the United States. I got to know of one society of extreme Feminism thus :

I was lunching one day, in a restaurant in Chambers Street, and sitting next to me at the counter was a fashionably dressed young man, whom I had often seen there before. He was a pleasant, frank-faced youth and was obviously a favourite with all the waitresses save one, a dark-haired girl, not bad-looking, but with a very supercilious expression. At least so I thought. The young man had made several attempts to draw her into conversation, but with signal failure. She either answered him in monosyllables or not at all. At last, encouraged by the sympathetic smiles of those around him, the young man waxed bolder and addressing the unfriendly waitress said, " I say, Miss, would you like a ticket for a concert to-night ? It's in Broadway, and Charlie (I couldn't catch the name, it sounded foreign) is singing."

" No," the girl snapped, darting a furious look at the young man, " I never go to concerts. I hate men singers."

" She hates all men," a pretty fair-haired waitress whispered in my ear. " She belongs to an Anti-man League."

The pretty waitress then told me that this Anti-

man League numbered several hundred members, mostly school teachers and actresses, and that one or other of them was always trying to persuade her to join them.

"And are they likely to get you?" I asked.

"No fear!" the pretty waitress replied. "I have no grudge against men. I like them." And she looked into my face, and smiled.

CHAPTER XVI

MY VOYAGE IN THE ILL-FATED "ELBE"

When the time drew near for my return to England, I began to wonder how I should get there. I could not afford to travel either first or second-class and did not altogether relish the idea of going steerage, as steerage in those days, even on the best equipped and most expensive liners, was not very comfortable. It may be of interest to some to compare the fares to and from the U.S.A. then with the fares now. When I went out as an ordinary first-class passenger on the old "Majestic" I paid £12. It is true I did not have a cabin to myself for this sum, I had to share one with several other people, but the food was excellent, and I had every other privilege enjoyed by those who paid more. The second-class fare was £8, and the steerage somewhere, I believe, in the region of thirty shillings. I have not a scale of the present day fares by me, but I believe even what is now termed tourist third, a kind of intermediate class between second and third, is over £30, and considered cheap at that. No wonder people have to be pretty well off to-day to afford an ocean trip.

To resume my narrative. As I have said, I was debating in my mind how I could best get to England, when someone staying at the Cosmopolitan at the time suggested that I should try the "Elbe," a North German Lloyd ship.

"I think," he said, "if you took a steerage ticket, you might arrange with one of the under officers or engineers, on payment of a little extra, to let you use his cabin. I have done so on several occasions."

Adopting his advice, I went at once to the offices of the North German Lloyd, booked steerage, and was able, on payment of about thirty shillings extra to one of the under officers, to have a tiny cabin to myself. I had, however, to use the same deck as the steerage passengers, and was given similar food served out in tin dippers.

For breakfast we had tea without milk, bread and margarine; for our midday meal, facetiously termed dinner, either stew, consisting of ingredients I never dared even to sample, they looked so offensive, or rancid bacon and sauerkraut. Sometimes we had a few potatoes and prunes, and these and bread were the only articles in the menu I could eat. Tea was a repetition of breakfast, and supper usually consisted of cocoa, and bread, and margarine, or, by way of variation, something supposed to be cheese.

Our journey took about nine days, and during the whole of that time I lived on bread, prunes, potatoes, and milkless tea. I am told that things have changed since that day, and that the steerage passengers on German liners are better catered for now. I hope it is so. I did not see the steerage sleeping quarters, but judging by the English steerage passengers' description of them, they must have been on a par with the food. I frequently saw a German officer or seaman push or thrust steerage passengers on one side, in a manner no British sailor would have done; indeed, such a thing would have been impossible on a

British liner; and had there been more British steerage passengers on board there might have been trouble; but as there were only a handful, and these mostly women, it was deemed expedient to grin and bear any indignity we were called upon to suffer. Naturally, a great deal of grumbling prevailed, and when we arrived at Southampton and were all on board the tender that was to land us, our long pent-up feeling found a vent, and shaking our fists at the German officers and crew, who were leaning on the taffrails watching us depart, we shouted and yelled "Rule Britannia" till we were hoarse.

Several of us, myself included, wrote strong letters of complaint to various London newspapers, regarding our treatment on the "Elbe," but for reasons best known to themselves the editors refused to publish them.

A few weeks later, the "Elbe" met with a tragic end. On her way to New York, and when about 70 miles from Lowestoft, she was run into by the "Crathie," a small British vessel, and sunk. She had on board at the time nearly 800 people, and of these only 28 were saved. I was not at all surprised to see in the papers that the bulk of the survivors were members of the crew, and that little or no attempt had been made to save the passengers. Indeed, after my recent experiences of the ill-fated vessel, I should have been astonished had it been otherwise.

A day or two later after the catastrophe, I received a letter from a fellow steerage passenger, who had travelled by train with me from Southampton to London.

"So the 'Elbe' has met her end," he wrote. "The papers call it an accident, but it was really Nemesis. Well, well, there is something in Providence, after all."

A month or so later, I went to a waxwork exhibition in Leicester Square. It was, I may remark in passing, the most gruesome thing of its kind I have ever seen. Among the exhibits were many instruments of torture, said to have been once in actual use, and to illustrate their use waxwork effigies of people were shown undergoing the torture so realistically that some of the visitors to the show fainted. Well, this exhibition showed a tableau purporting to represent the sinking of the "Elbe," and it is nothing short of amazing that of all the thousands of people who viewed it, I alone, according, at least, to the proprietors of the show, had any fault to find with it. Yet it was obviously all wrong. Whereas the "Elbe" was a modern liner, that is to say a screw steamship, the waxwork model of her represented a three-masted sailing vessel of probably the forties or fifties!

I recall two incidents that happened on the "Elbe," while I was on board her. One is merely humorous, but it created a good deal of excitement at the time. Among the steerage passengers was a German Jew named Rosenheim, commonly called "Old Rosyide," whose insatiable appetite rendered him extremely unpopular. No bacon was too rancid, no meat too high for him; in fact the more rancid the bacon and the higher the meat the greater seemed his enjoyment of them. Now, the bunk above Rosyide's was occupied by Pat Daly, an Irishman, and Pat had bought a ham in New York, which he intended

sharing on Sunday with some of his particular cronies. Well, Pat awoke one night, to hear a stealthy crunching and munching just below him, and in the morning he found his ham had gone. His suspicions falling upon Rosyide, he waited till the latter was on deck and then searched his bunk. His efforts were speedily crowned with success, for under the pillow in the bunk lay all that remained of the precious ham. Pat was so indignant that he would have rushed on deck and assaulted Rosyide then and there, had not two of his friends held him back and pacified him by suggesting a much better and far more subtle mode of punishment. Thus, it came about that, when Rosyide was snoring in his bunk that night, Pat and his two friends crept up to him, and while one drew the back of a razor across his gullet, another deluged his throat with water. The result was as anticipated. Rosyide, feeling the cold steel and water on his flesh, sprang out of his bunk and rushed on deck, shrieking out: "Captain, captain, they've cut my throat. Save me. I am bleeding to death." One of the ship's officers, hearing the disturbance and perceiving Rosyide, clad only in his nightshirt, rushing frantically across the deck with one hand to his throat, shouted to him to stop.

"What the devil's the matter with you?" he demanded angrily. "You'll wake everyone on the ship."

"Oh, Gott in himmel, my throat's cut, my throat's cut!" Rosyide gasped.

"Nonsense!" the officer replied, examining Rosyide with the aid of a lamp. "There's not a sign of blood."

"Oh, but zer is, zer is, sir," Rosyide groaned. "I can feel ze blood trickling through my fingers."

"Don't be a fool," the officer growled. "That's water. Someone's been playing you a trick. Get back to your quarters at once, or you'll get into trouble."

It was on the tip of Rosyide's tongue to remonstrate and demand the punishment of his tormentors, for he understood now, of course, that he had been cruelly hoaxed; but he suddenly recollected the ham and checked himself. He held his tongue, therefore, and running back to his quarters he crept silently into his bunk, amid roars of laughter from all present. Needless to say, he never stole food again from his fellow-passengers, at least on that voyage.

The other incident I recall was of a really tragic nature. Among the first-class passengers on board was the late Lord Vivian. Well, one day he took it into his head to see over the vessel, and in company with a young man whom I recognized as N. E. Bieber, an old Cliftonian, and my senior by several years, he visited our deck. Not wanting to be seen in the steerage quarters by so fastidious a person as Bieber, I hid myself as best I could, and was fervently hoping I hadn't been recognized, when an elderly Frenchman, with whom I had occasionally chatted, touched me on the shoulder, and pointing at Lord Vivian and Bieber, whispered:

"One of those two gentlemen won't live long."

"Why on earth do you think that?" I queried.

"Because," he replied, "there is a large spider's web floating in the air behind them, and in Touraine, where I come from, we believe floating spiders' webs are a sure sign of death."

I strained my eyes, but did not see the web and told him so.

"You do not possess second sight," he replied. "I do. The web's there, I can assure you, and one of those gentlemen will die shortly."

He spoke so seriously and looked so concerned that I was convinced that if he didn't actually see what he said he saw, he believed he did. And in a measure his prediction was verified. Lord Vivian died shortly afterwards. I forget the exact date of his death, but I believe it was within a year or so of the incident, while Bieber died in South America only a few years later.

I remember several other predictions being made on board the "Elbe" during the voyage. For instance, a German sailor declared that he had seen the captain's dopeldanger (to see a person's dopeldanger is a sure sign that they will not live long), while one of the steerage passengers was certain that the ship was doomed because he had seen a number of tiny blue lights, called "Death Lights" in the Hebrides and West Scotland, hovering over the fo'c'sle.

After leaving the "Elbe" at Southampton, I took the train to Waterloo. Though not as large as it is now, Waterloo was a big station even then, and I remember feeling quite bewildered when I alighted on the platform and looked around me. Such throngs of people, all hurrying and scurrying, such a shouting and whistling, and so many platforms and entrances and exits!

When last I had visited London, it had been to sit for my examination at Burlington House, and, until now, I had never been on the south side of the river.

Hence, on quitting the station, where I left my luggage, and emerging into the Waterloo Road, I found myself in surroundings entirely new to me. And very strange and sordid I thought them. Since those days the neighbourhood has improved almost out of all recognition, so that I am sure no one living in it now will take offence when I refer to the impression it made upon me then. It struck me as being the very acme of sordidness. Everywhere it was the same, dingy, dilapidated houses, drab and dirty-looking people. I could imagine no part of London, in appearance at least, more depressing, and the prospect of living there even temporarily did not appeal to me. However, I had to get a room somewhere, and as my funds were very low I could not wander far, and my room would have to be cheap.

Now, as nasty neighbourhoods, like other nasty things, are, as a rule, cheap, I decided to look for quarters in this district, and with this end in view I wandered down Stamford Street. It was, I found, mostly inhabited by foreigners of a low type and naturally, perhaps, the houses in it were ill-kept and in need of repair. The walls and ceilings of those I went into were grimed with dirt, if there were any carpets they were threadbare, the furniture, of which there was often a superfluity, was dilapidated, and the landladies were mostly on a par with their effects. Some of them in an attempt at " make-up " had painted their cheeks, while not a few wore cheap jewellery, chiefly in the shape of drop ear-rings, silver lockets and clasp bracelets. One woman who looked a trifle cleaner and not quite so un-prepossessing as those of her neighbours whom I

had previously interviewed, said she had a very nice front room to let on the second floor.

On inspection, I found it to be a fair-sized room, with no distinctive feature, the furniture consisting, for the most part, of the usual items—a rickety table, a couple of almost seatless chairs, an insubstantial washstand, and a yellow grained chest of drawers. Seeing that it had two beds ranged side by side. I remarked that as I only needed one bed, perhaps she would kindly remove the other.

"Why, yer surely don't think yer can 'ave this room to yourself!" was the reply. "A German waiter sleeps in this 'ere bed, and yer share the room with 'im. 'E's a nice, respectable young feller, you'll get along together capital."

This certainly took me aback. It was indeed a revelation, a revelation as to how the really poor live, and concealing my surprise as best I could, I thanked this kind woman (I could plainly see that she meant to be kind) for her offer, though, at the same time, I declined it and took my leave. But her parting words—"Why, we never puts less than two in a room and sometimes we puts three or four. We couldn't pay our rent if we didn't," spoken in an apparently candid and explanatory though somewhat reproachful manner, made me feel not only very sad and depressed but also very apprehensive. Indeed, it was some time before I felt I could face another prospective landlady and risk another such set-back.

However, in my search for a room, Fortune for once befriended me. I had dropped into a little restaurant in York Road, and, as I sat there, I chanced to overhear the girl behind the counter

remark to a customer that they had two rooms to let. Consequently, when that customer had gone, I enquired the price of the rooms, and, on finding that one was just within my means, I took it. It was right at the top of the house, and there were a good many stairs to mount to get to it, but I was young and active in those days, and the place was fairly clean, and the landlady English. Since then, in the course of my wanderings, I have had many landladies, but I think she stands out as the kindest of them all.

She had three children, the young girl who served behind the counter and two sons, and she was as devoted to them as they were devoted to her. Indeed, a more united family it would have been hard to find. She was a pattern mother in an age when mothers were mothers and loved wholeheartedly both their children and their home. It was, no doubt, because she was such a good mother that she was so kind to me, at a time when I so much needed kindness.

I had relatives and friends in London, but I had resolved that they should not know my whereabouts until I had proved to them that I was not the waster that some of them, perhaps, would have been only too ready to dub me, but a worker, hard hit by fortune, it is true, but determined to make good.

I could, of course, walk about Lambeth, without the slightest fear of meeting anyone I knew, and thus feeling free and as far as possible independent, I at once set out in search of work. In those days, to anyone placed as I was, life in London could be very lonely. There were few clubs in existence then that were not beyond the means of any but the

very well-to-do, and although that most admirable institution the Y.M.C.A. was in full swing, I felt that it was of little use to me as I had so little in common with its members.

However, this period of isolation, which, perhaps, was courted by rather than forced upon me, passed happily enough. I spent the daytime studying shorthand at Pitman's, which was then in Chancery Lane, and almost every evening, armed with my notebook, I wandered abroad, chiefly in the south-east suburbs and the East End.

CHAPTER XVII

EARLY EXPERIENCES IN THE EAST END

Sometimes, now, when I want a change of surroundings and atmosphere, I pay a flying visit to Wapping Old Stairs, Limehouse and other of the East End districts. I cannot say they afford a pleasing contrast to the West End, but they interest me all the same, and I like to compare the conditions I find there now with those prevailing at the time of my sojourn in York Road. It was only a few years before this sojourn of mine, that the series of crimes known as the Jack the Ripper crimes had taken place in Whitechapel, and when I visited the localities that had witnessed these tragedies, I could not help thinking how horribly squalid and overcrowded they were.

In the Far Eastern, as well as in many of the Continental city slums, there is usually something to redeem the squalor, maybe some picturesqueness in the garments and colouring of the people, or in the architecture, or in both, but in the poorer parts of the East End of London, at this date, there was simply nothing. They were unqualifiedly nasty. Then, as now, the East End was very cosmopolitan, having at Limehouse a floating Chinese population, mainly composed of seamen and lodging-house keepers, with a sprinkling of tradesmen and laundry-

men ; at Whitechapel, a dense population of Jews, and at Wapping, a small colony of the poorest-class Irish. At night and even in the daytime, many of the streets and alleys were unsafe. Groups of young roughs, composed of girls as well as boys, marched about singing, shouting and jostling anyone that barred their progress, and fights almost to the death were frequent. Shopkeepers lived in momentary expectation of having their windows broken and their goods stolen, and if they dared complain to the police, their lives were made so unendurable that in the end they had to leave the neighbourhood.

At last things came to such a pitch, that the Press took the matter up, and as so often happens when the Press intervenes, the affairs were referred to in Parliament, and then, but not till then, the police moved. A number of plain clothes constables armed, so it was alleged, with knuckle-dusters, paraded the worst districts, and the hooligans, finding the tables turned on them, very discreetly decided to lie low, at any rate for a time.

However, when I was staying in York Road, the hooligan *régime* was still paramount. From what I saw myself, the girl hooligans appeared to be as bad as the men.

I was walking along a street in Wapping one evening, a few yards behind a respectably dressed old man, who looked like the retired captain of a small coasting ship. I stopped to look down a court where a fight seemed imminent between two Jew boys, when a loud altercation in the street I was in made me look round. Two girls of probably not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, and

wearing hats with what were popularly known as "'Arriet" feathers in them, were holding the retired captain, who, as I have said, was an old man, by the arms, and calling him names.

"If you don't take care," I heard one of them say, "I'll do yer in, blamed if I won't, yer —— old devil." She then struck him on the face, while her companion kicked him, and had I not hastened to his rescue, it is not at all unlikely that they would have carried out their threats.

As they ran off I asked the old man, who was wiping the blood off his face with a very dirty handkerchief, if he would not give them in charge.

"No," he said, "it would be as much as my life is worth. They belong to a gang, and if I got them into trouble, their pals would attack me in a body and perhaps kill me. They are very bad girls; they stole my cat one evening, and when I tried to rescue it, they fell on me and beat me, and had not someone heard me call out and come to my assistance, as you did just now, they would most likely have beaten me to death. They are simply savages."

"But why did they steal your cat?" I asked. "Surely such girls can't care for cats."

"They care for them, but only for what they can make out of them."

"Make out of them?"

"Yes, on their skins.* Cat skins fetch about sixpence each, sometimes more. There is a regular trade in them."

*I was informed some years ago by a schoolmistress in the East End, that she had reason to believe this horrible practice still went on, the offenders being chiefly children of Polish and Russian Jews.

"Do you mean to say those girls stole your cat merely to kill it and sell its skin?"

"Yes, lots of girls and boys—mere children—prowl about at night on the look-out for cats, and whenever they see one they pounce on it, thrust it into a bag, and take it home and skin it."

"How do they kill them?"

"They don't kill them, they skin them alive."

"Skin them alive! Do you really mean it?"

"Yes, they say the skins are much better taken off the animal when it's alive. After all, they do the same to seals, and it's no worse than boiling crabs and lobsters alive. Human beings are monstrously cruel."

"Have you any actual proof of this cat skinning? Have you seen it done?"

"No, thank God, I haven't, I've only been told, but it's a pretty generally recognized thing about here. Not long ago, a bag was found full of skinned cats, and the case was reported in one of the papers, but although the police took the matter up, no arrest was made."

"One of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ought to hear of this," I remarked.

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"They couldn't do anything if they did," he said, "it's a question of intimidation. No one dare come forward to give evidence, because they know very well that if they did, they would be marked people, and would sooner or later pay the penalty. People are constantly disappearing in this neighbourhood, and when their bodies are found in the Thames, and an open verdict is returned, 'Found

drowned,' or something of that sort, most of us who live in these parts smile, because we know very well that they have been pushed or thrown in the river and that what, for want of evidence, is attributed to accident or suicide, is in reality murder."

"You say you know very well that these people have been murdered, but surely you only surmise it?" I asked.

"As you like," the old man responded. "I have no wish to argue." He then bade me good evening and hobbled painfully away.

The 'Arriet of those times, armed with her hat-pins, which she not infrequently used when drunk or angry, was a really formidable creature. I remember seeing an affray in which one of her species figured in a public-house in Shoreditch. I was standing at the bar one night, quaffing Bass, and taking stock of the customers, some of whom interested me not a little, when two girls of the 'Arriet genre began to quarrel, and strange as it may seem in these feminist days, they were quarrelling over a man, or, to use their own language "feller." Suddenly, one of them slapped the other in the face, whereupon the latter quickly drew a long pin from her hat and with a fearful oath plunged it in her assailant's arm. She would have repeated the stab, had not some of the male spectators interfered. The wounded girl was taken off by her friends, while the other girl, unabashed and brandishing her hat-pin the while, told us what she intended to do to her adversary when next they met, and then walked triumphantly away.

A few nights later, when I was in that "pub" again, I was surprised to see the two girls laughing

and chatting together, apparently on the very best of terms.

Dangerous as 'Arriet with the 'at-pin could be, she was a great improvement on the Orange girls of the fifties and sixties. In the early nineties, the time I am writing about, there were still many people who could remember the reign of terror created by these Orange girls, who were mostly Irish, and used chiefly to haunt the railway-stations and bridges. On one occasion[1] three of them, all under 21 years of age and by no means ill-looking, followed an old sailor into a tavern and there robbed and assaulted him. He was rescued out of their hands by the opportune arrival of a policeman, but after testifying against them at the police court, he had to be protected against a small army of their friends, all Orange girls, who threatened to tear him to pieces, if ever they got the opportunity. And there is little doubt but that they would have carried out their threats had he not very discreetly left the neighbourhood.

It is on record that one of these Orange girls, single-handed, attacked a coalwhipper in the street, struck him in the face, threw him on the ground, robbed him of all he possessed, and was proceeding to strangle him, when a policeman came up and intervened. The Orange girl, however, "went for" the policeman, and he had to summon several other policeman before she could be subdued and taken to the police-station.

My reference to this case is not merely incidental. Its purpose, surely a useful one, is to show that the male sex, as some of the Feminist organizations of

[1] *Vide* "News of the World," April 3, 1859.

the present day would lead one to suppose, is by no means responsible for all the acts of sheer savagery that have ever been committed. It may surprise some to learn that one of the theories circulated in the autumn of 1888, regarding the Jack the Ripper crimes, was that the culprit was a woman. To many people such a theory may seem fantastic, but I can assure my readers that numbers of the men and women whom I met in the East End steadfastly adhered to this theory, and, moreover, saw nothing remarkable in it. I might mention that criminal cases in which women played a prominent rôle were very much in evidence in the East End at that period. Take, for example, the disappearance of Urban Napoleon Stanger,[1] in Lever Street, St. Luke's, and that of Eliza Carter, in West Ham,[2] and the Georgina Moore case; but for my own part, I still believe that Jack the Ripper was some medical man obsessed with the mania for destroying women of the unfortunate class. A case of haunting was told me à propos of these crimes, and in my opinion it was, in all probability, connected with one of them.

Late one night, about a month after the murder of Lizzie Stride, a Whitechapel tradesman was passing along Berner Street towards the end that leads into Commercial Road, when his attention was arrested by a series of the most harrowing moans and groans which, however, he could not quite locate. Thinking that Jack the Ripper had been at his work again or that someone was taken violently ill, he

[1] Autumn of 1881. *Vide* contemporary Press.
[2] Jan., 1882. *Vide* contemporary Press.
[3] Dec., 1881. *Vide* contemporary Press.

drew other pedestrians' attention to the sounds, and in less time than it takes to tell quite a number of people had collected. The tradesman then, although he didn't think the moans and groans actually came from it, was about to knock at the door of one of the houses when a woman in the crowd called out, "It's no good knockin' there, guv'nor, them sounds don't come from that house, they're in the street 'ere—we've often 'eered 'em since poor Lizzie Stride was done to death close to this 'ere spot."

I also heard, and, in this case from several sources, that the house in Miller's Court, Dorset Street, Spitalfields, where Mary Janet Kelly was murdered was afterwards haunted. A woman in black, said to be the ghost of poor Kelly, was often seen entering the house and looking out of its windows, while strange sounds were heard proceeding from it. Hearing that I was interested in ghosts a man named Andrews, a clerk, informed me that the house where he was lodging in Commercial Road, Whitechapel, was haunted, adding that he would be glad if I would sit up with him one night and investigate the haunting. To this I agreed.

"I won't tell you beforehand what happens," he said, "because then what you experience can't be put down to suggestion."

The night chosen by me for the investigation was in March, and the weather was bitterly cold. There was absolutely nothing ghostly about the house; it was just a very uninteresting, small and comparatively modern building, crammed full of shoddy furniture and reeking of fried fish and a variety of other unpleasant smells. My friend's room was on

the first floor, and after everyone in the place had retired to bed, we opened the door and sat facing the little landing. After we had been sitting there for about an hour in absolute silence—we didn't talk, not wishing to disturb other people in the house—I was suddenly conscious of an eerie feeling, and immediately afterwards I heard a jingling and tinkling sound, such as is made by the small bells on a child's harness, and following that, a sound that seemed to have been made by an india-rubber ball hitting the wall opposite and landing back on to the floor beside me. Andrews immediately lit the gas, but nothing was to be seen. When he had closed the door of the room, he said :

" You heard those sounds. Well, we all hear them every night. They always occur about the same time, and although we are trying hard to find some natural explanation to them, so far we have failed."

" And, in my opinion, you will continue to fail," I said, " for the impression I received was that they were superphysical."

A repetition of this experience on several subsequent nights strengthened and confirmed this impression.

CHAPTER XVIII

A STRANGE AFFAIR IN THE YORK ROAD

York Road, Lambeth, is perhaps much the same outwardly as it was at the latter end of the ninteenth century, but within the last few years, especially, it has undergone, psychologically, a great change. The inhabitants and habitués of the street, when I was lodging in it, were, I believe, mainly composed of both male and female undesirables of all sorts, and, according to my landlady, whose integrity I could vouch for, it could barely boast of one unquestionably respectable house, besides her own.

Rows, accompanied by cries of "murder," were of frequent occurrence in the street, but, strange to say, few murders were committed in it, or, I might say more truly, perhaps, that few were ever brought to light. Soon after I took up my abode in York Road, I heard something that sounded to me very like a murder taking place in the street immediately below my window. I was confined to my room with a bad attack of bronchial catarrh, the result of the almost arctic weather—the spell of cold that January, lasting several weeks, was said to have been the most intense and protracted since the famous winter of 1880-1—and had gone to bed, though not to sleep, when I heard a man call out, "Now, I've got you." There was then a smothered cry of

terror, a thud, as of someone falling down, a few stifled groans, and then, after a brief spell of silence, whistling.

Almost immediately afterwards a cab—a "growler," as the four-wheeled cab was termed in those days—drove up, and after the driver, apparently, had come to some understanding with his prospective fare—for a brief conference, carried on in very low tones, by the way, ensued between them—drove away. About five minutes later, I heard heavy steps like those of a policeman halt outside the house for a few moments, and then pass on. After this there was silence. However, I did not go to sleep, and, consequently, it was with a feeling akin to delight that I hailed my landlady in the morning, when she brought me, knowing that I was ill, an early cup of tea. As I thanked her for this welcome attention I noticed that she was looking very pale and agitated, and my mind immediately reverting to the above incident, I asked her if she had heard anything in the night.

"Heard anything!" she said. "I not only heard it all, but I saw it, too."

She then explained to me that she slept in the front room of the basement, which was not very much below the street level, and was lying awake thinking of first one thing and then another, when she heard footsteps coming down the street. It was very late, she said; the traffic had long ago ceased, and everything was very still. The footsteps were a woman's, and when she got exactly opposite this house—my landlady could see her plainly—for the bed faced the window—she pulled up sharp with an exclamation of fright. The next instant a man, who

had evidently been hiding in our doorway, sprang out on her.

"Take that and that—you——," he exclaimed, accompanying each word with a blow. "That serves you right for peaching. You won't tell any more tales."

"When the stifling groaning had ceased," my landlady went on, "the man whistled and a cab came up, and he and the cabman between them put the woman inside and then drove off with her."

"They were in league, I suppose?"

"Undoubtedly. More than half the people in this neighbourhood appear to know each other."

"Didn't a policeman come up afterwards?"

"Why, yes; but it was all over then, and what could he do? He must have thought, of course, when he saw the blood on my doorstep, that there had been a pretty bad fight, even for this neighbourhood. But if he'd seen what I had, he'd have thought differently. The woman was murdered without the shadow of a doubt, and I shall never forget it."

Needless to say, my landlady did not get over the shock she had received for some time. However, sordid and disreputable as York Road was in those days, it was infinitely preferable to Stamford Street, which bore a very sinister reputation. It was entirely inhabited by foreigners, principally French and Belgian, and I was informed by a policeman that more than one of them had "served time" in their own country and were suspected of crime of all kinds in London. I learned much that was interesting from an old street hawker called Jonathan (no one seemed to know him by any other name),

who had lived in the neighbourhood of Lambeth all his life and knew most of its history by heart.

He was a boy, he told me one day, when Eliza Grimwood was found murdered in her home in Wellington Terrace, Waterloo Road; "and no one," he added, "was ever took up for the crime," which was popularly assigned to the ever increasing category of unsolved mysteries.

"Not but what I always think the police 'ad an idea who done it," Jonathan observed, "as they 'ave in many another case which the papers style mysteries. I 'ad a shrewd suspicion myself at the time, and my mother 'ad, too. She knew Eliza well by sight, and said she was as tidy a lookin' girl as was to be found in the 'ole neighbourhood. The affair," he added, "gave Waterloo Road a bad name, which 'as stuck to it ever since. I could tell you something else as might interest you," he added, "seein' as you're interested in ghosts."

He then went on to say that for a long time after the murder the house in which it was committed was haunted. A Mrs. Glover, he said, one of his mother's friends, used constantly to visit someone lodging in that house, consequently she knew Eliza Grimwood and Hubbard, the man she lived with, very well by sight, and he had often heard Mrs. Glover declare that, on two mornings following, she had seen the ghost of the poor murdered girl, dressed just as she had been in her lifetime, making the bed in the room in which her body had been found, and the people in the terrace, he added, saw the ghost looking out of the window so often, that they eventually got used to it, and took no notice of it. I asked him if he knew whether Waterloo Bridge was haunted, and

his answer was, "Yes, the watermen and river police could tell you some queer tales about it; and I once saw something there myself. But before I tell you about it," he said, "let me say something about the so-called mystery. I 'eard the story of it from no less a person than 'Enry Errington, the tollkeeper on the bridge. It was the custom then to charge foot passengers a halfpenny for crossing the bridge. Well, 'e was in his office there one night in September, I forget the exact date, but believe it was about the 9th, when a woman carryin' a bag in one 'and came up, planted 'er money on the iron plate, and was proceedin' to pass through the stile, when the bag caught in it, turning the stile twice and causing Errington to lose the 'alfpenny. 'E told 'er what she 'ad done, and she answered in such a peculiarly gruff voice that 'e took a good look at 'er.

"There was a gas lamp close by, and as the light from it fell right on 'er, 'e was able to see 'er pretty clearly. I can 'ear 'im describin' 'er now. She was very sallow, 'e said, and 'ad a big mole on 'er nose. Also 'er 'air, which was white, was plastered down like a wig. She wasn't very tall, but stout and squarish. Errington lifted the bag over the stile for 'er, and as 'e did so, 'e noticed it was one of them carpet bags and it 'ad a pattern on it—a pattern of flowers. She told 'im she 'ad to catch a tram at Waterloo and 'urried on. In the morning, two boys rowing up the river found the bag on one of the abutments of the bridge, and when it was opened, it 'ad in it the remains of a man. From the number of wounds on it, it was evident the man 'ad been murdered. The coroner returned a verdict to

that heffect, but it was never discovered who the man was, and the crime was never brought 'ome to anyone."

"Another unsolved mystery," I observed.

"That's what the papers called it," Jonathan remarked. "It was generally thought, 'owever, the murdered man was a foreigner belonging to some Swedish ship at anchorage in the river, and that 'e 'ad been killed and chopped up on board 'er. And now," Jonathan added, throwing back his head and swelling out his chest, a little habit he had, "for *my* hexperience. About a month after the crime, I was crossing the bridge one night, and 'ad got to about the middle of it, when I felt someone or something brush past me, although I could see no one, with the exception of the tollkeeper, at either end. I was the only person on the bridge. I was scratching my 'ead, and wondering what it could 'ave been, for I was habsolutely certain, as certain as I am standing 'ere, that something did brush against me, when I 'eard a loud splash, as if some 'eavy body 'ad fallen in the river. I ran to the parapet and looked over, but though it was a light moonlight night, I could see nothing, not a ripple." Here Jonathan paused a moment to nod a greeting to a friend on the other side of the street. "Not a ripple!" he went on. "And the same thing 'appened again the following night at about the same hour, but I 'ave never hexperienced it since."

I suppose few of the London bridges have witnessed more suicides than those of Waterloo and Westminster, though I believe there has been a considerable decrease in the number of these sad endings of recent years. When my wanderings in

those now far-off nineties led me across those bridges, it was no uncommon thing to hear a shouting and screaming, and to see a number of people suddenly rush and peer over the side of the bridge into the brown depths below. "What has happened?" someone would ask, "Oh, only another suicide," would be the reply, and you would probably see a small paragraph in either the evening or morning papers announcing that some poor wretch, thinking to find a way out of his or her sorrows and difficulties, had jumped into the Thames. Chiefly owing to unemployment, quite a large proportion of the suicides in those days were women, but now the state of affairs with regard to unemployment being reversed, when one reads of a suicide in the Thames, although, as I have said, suicides in general are by no means so frequent, it is usually a man.

À propos of unemployment amongst women about this time, I was walking one evening along the Embankment in the direction of Westminster Bridge, when I noticed two fairly well-dressed girls sitting huddled together on a seat. As it was a bitterly cold and wretched night in mid-winter and very few people were about, I wondered at this and turned to look at them, whereupon one of them called out, "I say, mister, we are starving, can you spare a copper?" I felt in my pockets, but the only coin I had was half a crown, and being very hard up at the time, I couldn't possibly spare it. However, as the girls poured out a very pitiful tale, stating that they had lost their situations in some shop, owing to ill-health, and had just been turned out of their lodgings, because they had come to an end of their resources and couldn't pay their rent, I

said, " Look here, I'm not well off, and I'm hungry, too. I've had very little to eat since breakfast. Supposing we go to a coffee-house, or somewhere, and get a little food. I've just enough to pay for the three of us. How will that suit you ? "

" Capitally," they said, and forthwith set out with me to a cheap restaurant close to Westminster Bridge. The establishment did not boast of a printed menu, but a dirty-faced girl in a dirty apron and very delapidated boots told us we could have pea-soup, sausages and mashed, or tripe. Without referring to me, the girls at once said, " That'll do, we'll have all three, miss," but as my funds did not permit of this liberality, I finally, and with great difficulty, persuaded them to content themselves with tripe. I had sausages.

During the meal neither of the girls said much, but ate with an avidity that testified to the truth of what they had told me. They were certainly, most certainly, hungry. After we had finished, and I was waiting for the waitress to bring me the bill, the girls, to my unmitigated astonishment and horror, cooly seized all the forks and spoons within their reach and were proceeding to stuff them into their pockets, when I interposed. Never in my life, either before or since, have I pleaded so whole-heartedly and with such sheer desperation as I did then to make those two girls restore what they had stolen, and whilst I pleaded, I shall never forget the agony of mind I was in lest the waitress should suddenly arrive and discover the theft. But in the end I prevailed. With much protestation and many swear-words, the girls sullenly restored the articles, which, as a matter of fact, being neither silver nor

even silver-plated, were probably only worth a few pence, and the bill duly paid, we all three quitted the building. We parted on the pavement; not before they had called me a few very uncomplimentary names for not allowing them to keep the forks and spoons; and that was the last I ever saw of them.

Close to the spot where I met these two girls, I once talked with a policeman, who had one or two strange tales to tell about Westminster Bridge.

"People say," he remarked to me, "that queer things are seen at times during the night on this bridge, and I can quite believe it, because although I've never actually seen anything myself, I've heard something on several occasions that I could not account for.

"Late one night, exactly two years ago, I was crossing the bridge, off duty, and had got about two-thirds the way over—I was bound for Kennington, where I live—when someone tapped me very gently on the shoulder and a voice, which sounded like a woman's, said in very clear, distinct tones, 'This is the spot, this is the spot.' I turned round, but no one was anywhere near me. The same thing happened again the next night, and the night after, at the same time and in about the same place. Well, the following night, I had reached that spot and was expecting any moment to hear the voice, when a man suddenly rushed across the pavement in front of me and began to climb the wall, with the obvious intention of jumping over into the river. I was just in time to prevent him. As he did not struggle, but behaved quite quietly and naturally, I did not take him into custody. He told me he was a clerk, that he had been out of work for some time, and

that having come to the end of his resources, he had decided to destroy himself.

"I reasoned with him, I saw him off the bridge," the policeman went on, "and after I had given him a few pence, all I could afford, and he had promised me that he would try again for a job the following day, I left him. I never saw or heard of him again. But I have always wondered what that voice was and whether it had anything do do with him."

"Did you hear the voice again?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "never, though I have crossed the bridge many times since, at all hours of the night and morning."

He then told me that the figure of a man with a very white face and a black moustache, wearing a top hat and frock coat, was said to be seen occasionally at midnight jumping over Westminster Bridge. "A man dressed like that," he explained, "did actually commit suicide off the bridge on the stroke of twelve one night in December, 1889, and as, after that, no more Whitechapel atrocities took place, he was thought by some to be Jack the Ripper. Anyhow, whether he was Jack the Ripper or not, it is the ghost of this man, apparently, that people occasionally see jumping over. But from my own experience it seems pretty clear that the bridge is haunted not by one ghost only but by several."

Just one more river incident before I pass on. I was standing one clear, starlight night close beside Cleopatra's Needle, when I heard someone quite near me, I thought, whistling a well-known air with all the art of a past master. The performance was, in fact, so alluring and seductive that I listened spellbound, and when the whistling ceased, looked

round, hoping that I might catch a glimpse of my entertainer. To my surprise, he was nowhere to be seen. There was positively no one that I could see within a hearing distance.

About a week later, happening to be again on the Embankment, I again paused beside Cleopatra's Needle and again heard the whistling. But again I could see no one to account for it. Prompted by curiosity, I repaired to the same spot several nights in succession, and every night the same thing happened—I heard that soft, seductive whistling, emanating, I was now convinced, from some invisible presence, peculiarly feminine and peculiarly Oriental.

One night, however, as I stood listening, perhaps even more than usually fascinated, the whistling broke off abruptly and was succeeded by a curious sound, a sound that seemed to be half shudder and half sigh, and after that, although I went, time after time, to the same spot at the same hour of the night, I never heard the whistling again.

CHAPTER XIX

LONDON PARK GHOSTS

Having told in the preceding chapter of the many tragedies, mysteries and crimes that have been witnessed on two of London's oldest bridges, namely, Waterloo and Westminster, in the past, I will now turn to the Parks. Many of these have vied, and still vie, with the riverside in the presentation of misery.

Though there were rules then as to closing, just as there are now, those rules were nothing like so rigidly enforced, and crowds of tramps and outcasts of all kinds, animal as well as human, slept under the trees and bushes all night.

I shall never forget my first experience of a night in Hyde Park. It was in the summer of 1895. The sun had been perfectly grilling all day, and the air in the evening, long after sunset, was still positively hot.

About nine o'clock, I wandered into the Park through Marble Arch, which in those days was actually joined to the Park and formed one of the northern entrances to it. There were the usual crowds listening to the stump orators. Conspicuous amongst the latter was a religious fanatic informing those round him that the world might end at any moment and unless they followed his advice, and

henceforth shunned every form of amusement, they would go to Hell. Sad to say, however, when someone laughed, this preacher so far forgot his rôle as to turn round and swear at his detractor! Not many yards away, an Atheist was telling everyone there was neither God nor Hell, but that Nature alone was the paramount dominating factor. Both speakers were fluent, but they were utterly lacking in a knowledge of history, to say nothing of grammar, and their attempts, too, at answering the questions put to them were more often than not ludicrous failures. The present-day Park and street orator is somewhat better educated, but he is, generally speaking, quite as one-sided and intolerant of interruptions and every whit as unconvincing.

Education may have improved his vocabulary and enabled him to speak more grammatically, for example, he now rarely drops his h's, but, for all that, the stump orator as a rule—I admit there are and always have been exceptions—is still common. Modern education, with all its extension classes, its technical colleges, and schools, and innumerable examinations, cannot convert the sow's ear into the silken purse. It cannot metamorphose the male or female who is born common into the person who is born otherwise. Delicacy of feeling and consideration for other people's feelings, which are the hallmark of true gentility, is in the blood; it is handed down to us from remote generations of our forebears, and cannot be acquired at any school or even university.

But to return to that night in the Park.

After listening to the speakers for some time, I wandered away down the long path running parallel

with the Bayswater Road, and at length perceiving an unoccupied seat, I sat down.

For some time most of the people I saw were lovers, couples walking arm-in-arm or sitting in very close proximity to one another; and not a few of them were soldiers. On this occasion soldiers outnumbered civilians in the Park, and scarlet loomed large; for guardsmen and linesmen alike wore it, khaki, until quite recent years, being only used on foreign service and in wartime.

Soon after ten the Park began to empty. The servant-girls not wishing to risk dismissal for exceeding their time limit (rules in those days were not broken with impunity) made tracks for their respective homes with such right good will that even their stalwart lovers had some difficulty in keeping up with them; and so complete was the exodus that by eleven o'clock the Park, comparatively speaking, was a desert. All the chairs, of course, were vacated, and the only people to be seen on the seats were a few "unfortunates" who, at that period and for some years afterwards, made the Parks and Commons of London their hunting grounds, and a fair sprinkling of the rags and tatters brigade, many of whom, in all probability, had not tasted food for days, and therefore felt too feeble to move. However, with the majority of these poor outcasts fear of the keepers would seem to have prevailed, for eventually all but a very few got up and crawled away across the grass to the friendly cover of the trees and bushes, where, let us hope, they would remain undetected and consequently undisturbed.

When I entered the Park, I had no intention of staying there late; but now I could not help it,

I was so interested and fascinated by the change that had taken place in my surroundings ; by the silence that was growing more and more pronounced every minute, by the gentle swishing and rustling of the great trees, by the many shadows on the gravel path, and more than all by those huddled up figures still reclining on the seats. At last, I forced myself to speak to one of them.

Viewed in the sickly glare of a lamp, he looked about as near an approach to a corpse as it is possible for any living person to be. I happened to have some sandwiches and I offered him one of them. He thanked me very much and to my astonishment spoke in quite a cultured voice. His story, if it were true, and he seemed to be sincere, was common enough. He had been educated at one of the lesser public schools, and not having the means to go to either of the universities had become a clerk in some City office. All went smoothly enough for twenty years or so, that is to say until he became middle-aged, when the firm dismissed him suddenly, on the plea that they needed someone younger. He had saved very little money—how could he save much on two pounds a week ?—and being unable to get another billet, he had speedily become homeless.

" I have often thought of suicide," he said, " but I have never had the courage to resort to it. Although life's an utter misery to me, I somehow keep on clinging to it. I am not strong, I was a very delicate child, and you would think going without meals and lying in the open all night would soon kill me, but somehow or other I still survive, though I have frightful coughs and colds and am generally racked with rheumatic pains."

"I suppose most of the people who sleep out-of-doors like you, suffer very much," I remarked.

"Suffer!" he exclaimed. "I should rather think they do. You have only to take a walk among the trees and bushes to discover that. I'll guarantee you'd find plenty of people out here to-night suffering all the torments of cancer and in the last gasps of consumption. Dead bodies are often found on the grass and on the seats, too, in the morning. Being tramps no one bothers about them, and it is said their bodies are sent to the hospitals to be dissected by the students."

"It's a ghastly world," I said, "one only hopes the next world will be better."

The tramp was silent for some seconds, while he munched his sandwich, and then said slowly:

"If I had no doubts on that score, I think I might screw up courage to jump in the Serpentine. But some of my experiences, and in this very Park, have led me to believe that we go on in the next life pretty much the same as we do in this. I'll tell you one of my experiences, if you like.

"One night, towards the end of last summer, I came in here dead beat, after footing it all the way from hoppicking in Kent, and finding a fairly dry spot (it had been raining all day), under a tree over yonder—he indicated with a jerk of his head, a tree some little distance off—"I tumbled down anyhow and was soon asleep. I awoke with a start, to hear a voice close to me muttering, 'O God, O God, what pain, what pain!' This was repeated several times and then someone commenced groaning. Now there was nothing very unusual in that, for out here at night one hears all kinds of noises.

People often moan and groan and even shriek with pain, and talk all kinds of gibberish in their delirium, and one gets used to it. But being very tired and wanting to go to sleep, the sounds got on my nerves, and I shouted out, 'Shut up, can't you,' or words to that effect. The groaning continued, however, and I was about to call out again and use strong language, when right in my ears I hears a gurgle, followed by a noise like a death rattle.

"Thinking someone was dying, I sat up at once and looked around in the full expectation of seeing a dead body close beside me. To my surprise, however, there was no sign of one, and I could see no one within at least thirty yards of me. I had never believed in ghosts or in anything supernatural before, but I did now, and I was so unnerved and terrified I couldn't lie out there under the tree any longer. I got up and spent the rest of the night on one of these seats. I told this to several of the people who constantly come here to spend the night, and they all said they had experienced the same thing when sleeping under that particular tree. In my opinion and in theirs, it is haunted by the ghost of some poor wretch who died there in great pain.

"It's this experience," the outcast added, after a slight pause, "that has made me think that we must go on in much the same way in the next world as we do in this."

"Have you had any more ghostly experiences?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "by the Serpentine. About three weeks after hearing the noises under that tree, I came in here, feeling properly 'fed up' with everything. I had been trying to sell matches all day in

the Edgware Road and had only taken twopence. 'I'll go to the Serpentine,' I said to myself, 'and jump in. Anything's better than another day like this.' Well, I was walking across the grass leading to the Serpentine, when I suddenly saw a tall woman in black about twenty yards in front of me. How she got there was a mystery. I didn't see her come and could only suppose that she had been lying on the ground, in which case I might possibly have overlooked her, and had suddenly risen up. Anyhow, there she was. It was a very moonlight night, and I could see her very distinctly. She was very poorly dressed—a torn and threadbare coat and skirt, boots very down at the heels, and an old straw hat. Had she been tramping it on the roads, like so many of us, I wondered, or was she merely a London vagrant? From certain traits about her, which you would probably never discern but which are nevertheless very apparent to anyone who has been on the roads like myself, I concluded she was what you term a tramp. The odd part of it was that, although she seemed just to hobble along as if she was pretty well done, and I was walking apparently the faster of the two, she always managed to maintain the same distance ahead of me. This struck me as curious, and it aroused my interest to such an extent that I quickened my pace in order to overtake her and to see what she was really like. But to my amazement I did not get any nearer to her, although I was walking as quickly as I could, and she continued to walk in the same slow fashion. Well, we went on like this, I walking as fast as my aching and rheumatically limbs would allow me, and she apparently dragging along at a snail's pace, till we

came to the stretch of grass leading down to the Serpentine. A queer thing then happened. I saw her advance to within a few feet of the water and suddenly vanish completely. I saw nothing in front of me but empty ground and, beyond, the glittering surface of the Serpentine. Of the woman there was not a vestige. A strange, uncanny sensation came over me as I stood staring about me in bewilderment, and finally, too scared to stay any longer in such a lonely spot, I abandoned, for that night at any rate, all thoughts of suicide, and made speedy tracks for the more frequented parts of the Park."

This concluded my tramp friend's experiences with the superphysical, and after I had chatted with him a little while longer, I got up and wandered about on the grass. I soon discovered that what he had told me was quite correct. Here and there, under the trees and bushes, were numbers of outcasts, men and women, a few in sitting postures, their backs propped against the trunks of trees, but the majority either all huddled up or extended full length. Some were so still and their cheeks so pallid in the moonlight, that they looked like corpses, whilst others, either in their sleep or in delirium, kept groaning and moaning and muttering all kinds of gibberish.

It seemed extraordinary to me that all this suffering should be going on within so short a distance of a busy thoroughfare and in the bosom, so to say, of opulence.

The night was far advanced and I had been on my feet, with short intervals, for many hours, but I hadn't up to the present felt particularly tired. Now, however, a sudden feeling of weariness came

over me, and I lay on the ground and was soon fast asleep.

I awoke with a start to see a ragged figure bending over me.

" Have you a bit of baccy on you, or a cigarette ? " the figure said in quite a cultured voice. " I'd give my soul for a smoke."

Though I don't indulge that way myself, I often carry cigarettes in my pocket and I offered the man one. He all but clutched at it, at the same time overwhelming me with thanks.

" You're new at this game," he remarked, as he took his seat beside me on the grass and struck a match on what remained of the heel to his boot.

" Do you mean sleeping in the Park ? " I asked.

He nodded. " I've not been at it long myself," he went on, " and I shouldn't be here now but for the trees."

" The trees ! "

" Yes, the trees. They lured me when I was a child, and I grew up more and more fascinated by them. But I'm not much more than a boy now."

I looked at him clearly. He had a short stubby brown beard and moustache, and from his haggard and wan appearance might have been anything between thirty and forty.

" You think I'm middle-aged," he said, " but I'm not. I'm only twenty-four. I tell you, the trees did it. I come from Birmingham. My father is in business there ; and I was in an office in New Street and doing well enough, until, one fatal day in my summer holidays, I went camping out on the Avon. We pitched our tent near a clump of trees, consisting chiefly of ash and pollard, and at night I

used to love to lie awake and hear the leaves rustling in the breeze. It reminded me of tiny waves breaking and lapping on the seashore, and filled me with a longing to travel. When I got back to the office, I kept hearing those sounds, that gentle rustling and whispering, just as you can hear it now," and he remained silent for a moment, listening.

" It haunted me day and night," he went on, "and as a result, I grew very restless, and so careless and erratic in my work that my employers eventually sacked me. I got another office job, but the same thing happened again. I kept hearing that rustling and whispering, and again got the sack. This, of course, made my father very angry, and after a violent quarrel with him I left home. Since then, I have been on the roads, doing occasional odd jobs on farms and at Covent Garden. If I hadn't a very strong constitution it would have killed me long ago. As it is, however, despite shortage of food and sleeping out-of-doors, in all kinds of weather, I manage to keep fairly fit, always comforted with the thought that some day, perhaps, my father will relent and ask me to return home."

" And you attribute your misfortunes to trees ? " I asked.

" I do," he said. " Since I took to the roads, I've learned a lot about trees. Are you superstitious ? "

" To a certain extent."

" So am I, but I wasn't at all superstitious at one time, I wasn't till I became a tramp. Do you know that some trees attract spirits that exercise an influence, mostly evil, on all who come within their sphere of activity ? You see that tree yonder ? " He indicated a tall tree standing by itself just in

front of us. "It's haunted without a doubt. All who stay under it for any length of time feel it's influence, which is extremely baneful. There's something attached to it that simply goads you on to vice and crime. I know it, because I've experienced it myself and so, I believe, have scores of others. You wouldn't think it, at this distance, would you ? "

"Why no," I answered, "it certainly looks harmless, and—I was going to add—"ordinary enough," but stopped short, not a little startled to see some large, queer-looking object drop from the tree on to the ground immediately beneath it and vanish.

"What on earth was that ? " I ejaculated, turning sharply round to question my companion. But I got no answer. The tramp had vanished, too.

CHAPTER XX

GHOSTS OF THE LONDON PARKS AND COMMONS

One night, some few weeks after the incidents just narrated, I repaired to the Green Park, and leaving the broad path running parallel with Piccadilly, crossed the grass in the direction of the knoll which stands back some little distance from this path and thoroughfare.

The hour being late, and there being very few people about, I was greatly surprised to hear the strains of some stringed instrument. It came from the clump of trees on the summit of the knoll, and when I arrived there, I found, standing under the wide-spreading branches of an elm an old man strumming on a mandoline. He spoke very angrily, when I addressed him, but on my moving away he called me back and apologised. I guessed he was mad.

"Did you hear that?" he cried. "Trees are just as fond of music as cobras. I've lived in India and seen many a cobra tamed and made as docile as any pet animal by music. Would it surprise you to know that trees have souls?"

I told him it would surprise me very much.

"Oh, but they have," he said. "I know it. When I left India in 1874 I took a house at Wimbledon. Do you know Wimbledon Common?"

"Not very well."

"Well, there's a pond there, and near the pond there used to be a silver birch. Silver birches are very pretty, aren't they?"

"Yes, most trees are beautiful."

"I didn't say beautiful," snapped the old man. "I said pretty. There's a difference between pretty and beautiful. A pretty girl is not always beautiful, is she?"

"No."

"Very well, then! A pretty tree is not always a beautiful tree. Trees are just as individual as girls. I admire them much more than I admire girls"—here he sighed—"but I have never admired anyone or anything as much as I admired that tree. You will probably laugh because you are not a connoisseur of trees, but, to be quite frank with you, I fell in love with that tree, hopelessly in love. You are amazed?"

"It certainly does strike me as a bit odd," I replied, involuntarily edging away from the man, for I was quite certain now that I had to deal with a lunatic.

"No," he responded, divining my thoughts, "I'm not mad. The keepers in this Park know me quite well and will tell you I'm eccentric; but I'm not even that. I have studied trees all my life. I know more about them than any so-called botanist, and I'm certain they are just as sentient and sensitive as any human. This tree most certainly was. I could tell by the movement of its exquisite trunk and lovely, slender branches, that it was highly pleased with my attentions and reciprocated to the fullest extent all my affection. Night after night I

used to lie beside her out there on the Common, and she used to lull me to sleep by gently fanning on my face. This went on for several years, and all the while my love for that tree kept increasing, till it became the absorbing passion of my life. And then, one day, came tragedy.

" A terrible wind storm swept the whole country, leaving desolation and destruction in its wake, and among the many trees that were uprooted on Wimbledon Common was my beloved silver birch. I saw her beautiful trunk and battered, broken branches lying on the ground, and I wanted to buy her, to give her a proper burial, but they wouldn't let me.

" And now comes my proof that trees as well as humans and animals of the non-human species have spirits or souls and live again. The night after my poor deceased tree's removal I went on the Common to take a last look at the spot where she had stood, for now she was no longer there. I had decided to leave Wimbledon, and when I got there, to my utter amazement and joy there was my beloved tree back again in her place. As I approached her, she swayed gently to and fro, as if delighted to see me, and I thought I had never seen her look so graceful and symmetrical, and altogether lovely.

" Her smooth and polished trunk shone like tarnished silver in the moonlight.

" In an ecstasy of delight I rushed forward to embrace her, when, lo and behold, she suddenly vanished and my outstretched arms clasped only air ! I knew then, of course, that what I had seen was her spirit, that, like humans, she had not ' passed away,'

but merely 'passed on.' For three successive nights I saw her there but, after that, never again. Now please go."

I left him, and as I wandered on, the plaintive strains of his music, for he had picked up his mandoline and recommenced playing, sounded in my ears like a funeral dirge.

I learned afterwards that the old man was a member of quite a well-known West End club, and that he was generally regarded as quite sane, apart from this one mania—trees. Until recent years, both the Green Park and Hyde Park were the nocturnal haunts of monomaniacs and all sorts of queer people. I have seen boys, too fat to venture out of doors in the daytime for fear of exciting ridicule, solemnly promenading the more remote of the pathways there accompanied by their parents; and I have seen, too, on the same sidepaths, idiots, with dreadful spotted faces, led along by their keepers. At one time a woman in black, very heavily veiled, used to frequent the Green Park, and it was said by the night-birds that haunted the place, that she wore a veil to conceal her features, which very closely resembled a pig's. However, one stiflingly hot evening in August, an old woman tramp, generally known among the fraternity as "sore-eyed Jenny," saw the lady raise her veil, presumably to get more air, and was overcome with astonishment to see a face of unrivalled beauty, which she at once recognized as that of a famous American burlesque actress, who had recently been performing in a West End theatre. The actress, on seeing Jenny (Jenny, in all probability, had been on the stage) at once rose from the seat on which

she had been sitting and walked quickly away. And after that none of the night-birds ever saw her in the Park again.

It was the particular pastime of a member of one of the oldest titled families in England to walk through the same Park at night wearing a pair of ladies' long kid gloves, which he continually stroked in the most caressing manner possible.

It is said that the ghosts of several monomaniacs, who used to frequent the Green Park at one time, periodically haunt the scenes of their nocturnal rambles, and on one occasion I saw what I believe to have been two such phenomena.

Late one evening, some years before the Great War, I was walking along the broad pathway that runs parallel with Piccadilly, when a tall, distinguished-looking man, wearing a light-coloured overcoat, thrown open and disclosing a suit of evening clothes, suddenly crossed the path in front of me and walking towards the railings skirting the road, abruptly vanished. I was not looking for ghosts, not even thinking of them, my thoughts being at the moment centred on something quite ordinary and mundane, and the sudden and inexplicable disappearance of the man startled me. About ten minutes later, as I was walking along a path connecting the broad walk that runs parallel with Piccadilly with that running across the path from Piccadilly to Westminster another man, this time clad in a lounge suit and bowler hat, suddenly crossed the pathway in front of me, and after walking a few yards on the grass, also unaccountably disappeared. Hence, I affirm that the place is haunted, and I believe at times haunted very badly.

Nights in the open proved so entertaining that I extended my wanderings to Blackheath, Hampstead Heath, Clapham and Wimbledon Common, and soon got to know their respective idiosyncrasies. Some of these they have long since lost. In the nineties of last century Blackheath was frequented after nightfall by a few tramps and quite a number of the very poorest type of "unfortunate," principally from Greenwich. I only came across one case of haunting there, and that I did not actually experience myself. It happened thus. At about 2 a.m. one September morning, after I had been roaming about the Heath since 11 o'clock p.m., I was thinking that I would walk to Greenwich and wait there for the first train to take me back to London, when a man, who looked like a tramp, came running up to me, and in a very agitated voice asked if I would mind his walking with me till we got clear of the Heath. He was such a frail, wizen, poor-looking little fellow and seemed so genuinely scared, that feeling sorry for him I agreed. Had he been a hefty fellow, I might have felt nervous, for the Heath was singularly deserted, and I knew there were some desperate characters about.

"What has frightened you?" I asked, as we began walking in the direction of Greenwich.

"I've just seen my mother," he said. "Leastways, her ghost."

He then went on to explain that he came from Wales, where his mother, who was very old, lived.

"I was sitting on one of the seats here," he said, "trying to snatch a few minutes' sleep, when I heard my name called in a voice I seemed to recog-

nize, and on looking round, I saw a woman sitting at the far end of the bench staring at me. It was my mother. She kept moving her lips, as if trying to say something, but made no sound, and on my moving she suddenly vanished. I knew then it was her ghost, and I was so frightened that I jumped up and ran away."

"You don't think it was your imagination?" I suggested.

"No," he replied, "I'm quite certain it was an apparition. I'm Welsh and the Welsh see things the English foreigners can't see. My mother's dead. She came to let me know; and I can't help crying," he went on in broken tones, "for she was the only person in the world who cared for me." Still sobbing, he left me, when we got to the road leading to Greenwich, and I never saw him again.

If deeds of violence are a cause of haunting, Blackheath certainly ought to be haunted, for it has been the scene of several very grim and gruesome mysteries, some long since forgotten. In January, 1844, for instance, the skeleton of a girl, with very long and beautiful hair, was found only two feet beneath the soil on Shooter's Hill. The remains had been there a long time, and the fact that the back of the skull was beaten in proved it to be a case of murder—murder most foul. The assassin, however, was never brought to book. When I was tutoring at Blackheath in 1898, I met several people who remembered the case, and they told me the spot where the skeleton was found was afterwards said to be haunted by a figure in white, believed to be the ghost of the murdered girl. Then, on April 25th, 1871, Jane Maria Clousen, a servant girl, was

murdered in Kidbrooke Lane, and the perpetrator of that crime, too, escaped the gallows. The police arrested Edmund Walter Pook, a young printer, son of a Blackheath tradesman, but the evidence at the trial proved conflicting and the arrested man was acquitted. The ghost of poor Jane Clousen was said to haunt Kidbrooke Lane subsequently, and for a long time people gave it a very wide berth after dusk.

Some few years later, in 1878, Blackheath again acquired unpleasant notoriety through the burglaries committed there by Charles Peace, who was finally captured in the garden of a house in St. John's Park, after a long and desperate struggle with a constable.

Twenty years later, Blackheath's somewhat sinister reputation was enhanced by the murder of an old lady, a Miss Tyler, in the Kidbrooke Park Road. I remember the affair very well, because, at the time it occurred, I was games master at a school in St. John's Park. As in the 1844 mystery, however, and the case of Jane Clousen, this crime was never brought home, although one gathered from accounts of the case published in the papers that the default was not due to lack of clues.

Hampstead Heath, whither I often wandered, too, has also had its share of tragedies, though in more recent years, at any rate, the tragedies have been principally suicides. So far as is known, there have been few murders, either on or near the Heath. Water always has a strong fascination for certain people with suicidal tendencies, and the leg-of-mutton pond at Hampstead Heath is responsible for a large number of suicides. However, I have never

heard that it is haunted, though I have heard of ghosts being seen in various other parts of the Heath.

Probably, the tragedy that created the most sensation in connection with the Heath was the suicide there of the Irish Member of Parliament, John Sadleir. His body was found by a labourer at about 8.30 a.m. on Sunday, February 17th, 1856, on a mound of grass at the back of Jack Straw's Castle. It was lying on its back, with its head resting quite peacefully close to a furze bush, and by its side was a bottle labelled "Poison," and "Essential Oil of Almonds."

On its becoming known that the body was that of a well-known Member of Parliament, great interest and commiseration were aroused; but the latter underwent a considerable decrease when the public learned that John Sadleir had led a secret life of sin and was nothing more or less than a common or garden rogue and criminal. So much, of course, is now mere history, but it is not generally known that for years after the discovery of his body the place where it was found was said to be haunted by his ghost. In the autumn of 1898, when dining one evening at Jack Straw's Castle, I got into conversation with a retired commercal traveller, who told me of a strange experience he had once had, when passing near the scene of Sadleir's demise. It happened in the summer of 1857. He was crossing the Heath alone, one evening, and on arriving within a hundred yards or so of the place where the body was found, a man in a top hat, whom he described as being well but not smartly dressed, suddenly emerged from some bushes and com-

menced walking in front of him. As the man's back was turned to him, he could not see his face, but judging from his general appearance and the briskness of his walk, he deemed him to be about forty years of age. After he had walked a few yards my informant suddenly became conscious of a most profound stillness in the air, and noticed that although his own steps made a slight noise and awoke a faint echo, he could not hear those of the stranger. This awoke his curiosity, and he next noticed that although his own shadow appeared on the ground by his side, the stranger apparently had no shadow. However, he looked so material and altogether natural, that to the commercial traveller it seemed impossible that he could be other than a creature of flesh and blood like himself, and the two of them continued to advance till they came to a certain clump of bushes. The stranger, then abruptly swerving aside, plunged into the bushes and disappeared. Immediately afterwards a series of dreadful moans and groans came, so my informant thought, from the bushes, but, on thoroughly searching amongst them, he found no one ; there was, in fact, no trace anywhere of the mysterious stranger. He had completely vanished. My informant had heard it rumoured that the spot was haunted, and after his fruitless search he came to the conclusion that, for once in a way, rumour was right.

This sinister reputation attaching to this part of the Heath through John Sadleir's suicide and subsequent " appearances " was increased when, about two years later, Mr. Prior, a hosier, likewise took poison there, choosing for the scene of his suicide a spot not very far away from that selected for the

same purpose by John Sadleir. I should add that Mr. Prior's ghost, too, was said to haunt the Heath, appearing, as a rule, near to some fir trees in the vicinity of which his body was found.

In the neighbourhood of Hampstead poison as a medium for suicide would seem to have been almost more popular than water, for about the time that Mr. Prior took laudanum on the Heath, Mr. Ashcombe, a surgeon, took prussic acid. The latter suicide took place in a cottage, but, as far as I know, neither the cottage nor the Heath in its immediate vicinity was haunted.

It is, in fact, quite a mistake to suppose that all deeds of violence result in hauntings. I have good authority for saying that the house in Park Road, Richmond, in which Kate Webster murdered her mistress, Mrs. Thomas, in a manner too horrible to relate, has never been disturbed by any ghostly phenomena.

I, myself, experienced only one of the Hampstead Heath hauntings. In the summer of 1899, I was walking across the Heath, very early one morning, when I heard a noise like the report of a pistol fired by someone standing close to me. I was horribly startled, and immediately looked everywhere for the person who had given me this scaring, but I found no one, nor did I discover—although, almost literally, I left no stone unturned—anything that could in any way account for the noise.

I once witnessed a quarrel on Hampstead Heath that very nearly ended in tragedy. It happened one Easter Monday, and the disputants, two young but full-grown coster girls, tall and well-proportioned, were dressed in their best, to wit, bright-coloured

skirts, black velvet jackets and high-crowned wide brimmed hats, the latter trimmed with feathers (real ostrich) galore, and the former with a profusion of promiscuously attached (i.e., here, and there, and everywhere, regardless of design) pearl buttons. Both had been drinking over-much, and the dispute was over a man. A man called Herbert, alias 'Erbert, had apparently offended one of them. Anyhow, she began calling him names, whereupon the other girl promptly slapped her face. Then, quick as lightning, the smitten one drew a hatpin from her hat and would have struck her adversary with it, had not something happened to prevent her. Two black cats on a plot of ground close by had chosen that very moment for a quarrel, too, and the noise they made was so startling that both girls involuntarily paused and looked round. The sight, then, of the infuriated animals going for one another tooth and claw must have struck the girls as irresistibly comic (they were evidently not wanting in a sense of humour), for, after gazing at the spectacle in fascinated silence for some seconds, they burst out into loud laughter. And thus what might have proved a tragedy ended.

Clapham Common, though not to be compared either with Hampstead Heath or Blackheath as regards beauty, proved to me of much greater interest. This was not due to anything attaching to the Common itself, nor to its surroundings ; it was because of the people it attracted. The people who frequented Clapham Common were far more cosmopolitan, taking them as a whole, than those who frequented the heaths. In addition to the ordinary tramp, I have met gipsies on Clapham

Common and people of many nationalities—dour Scots, showing their proverbial thriftiness, when hard up, by preferring to sleep out of doors rather than spend a few coppers out of their scant store on a bed; smiling Irishmen, jolly despite empty purse and stomach and couch on mother earth; sad-faced, shivering Italians; sullen Swedes; and an occasional, silent Sphinx-like Chinaman. All these I have encountered in the dead of night on the Common; but I have met neither a Jew nor Jap there.

Like Hampstead Heath, however, Clapham Common would seem to have had a peculiar fascination for suicides; but more, perhaps, in long past than in recent years. For example, a relative of mine was sitting on a bench on the Common one day, when a well-dressed man came and sat down beside him.

"I don't know what you are going to do," he suddenly remarked, "but I am going to cut my throat."

Obviously he meant to commit suicide, and before my horrified relative had time to realize what was happening, he had actually carried out his threat.

The most sensational affair in connection with the Common of recent years was undoubtedly the murder of Leon Beron, a Jew, on New Year's morning, 1911; and subsequently, several people told me they had seen and heard "things," when passing by the spot where the crime was committed. One at least of these experiences is worth recording.

The narrator, whom I met in the spring of 1911, at a ladies' club in the West End, was taking his dog, he said, for a run on the Common one evening, and when he was close to the spot where Beron's body

was said to have been found, his dog ran into some bushes and immediately afterwards began to bark excitedly. Wondering what could have happened to upset the dog, he went round to the other side of the bushes to find out, and there saw the shadowy figure of a man standing in the moonlight not more than four or five yards away from him. It faded away in a few seconds, and directly it had gone the dog ceased barking and ran after him, wagging its tail, as if greatly pleased.

The other stories I heard were more or less of the same nature. I was on the Common one morning, when a local cabby, with whom I had often chatted, came up to me and said, "You know that talk we had about dreams the other day, sir? Well, I had a dream last night about the Common which has upset me."

"What was it?" I asked.

"Why, this," he said. "I dreamed three times following that I was sitting on one of the seats out here when someone touched me on the shoulder. I turned sharply round and saw a tall figure in a winding-sheet. It had one arm outstretched, and said in a voice, which I at once recognized as my father's, who died twenty years ago come the 3rd of next March, 'I'll be waiting for you here, Bill, to-day fortnight.'

"I awoke then, simply sweating with fright. If I hadn't twice dreamed the same thing again, I might have put it down to an ordinary nightmare, but I feel sure, sir, it's intended as a warning."

I thought so, too, though I pretended to be amused. After we had chatted together for some minutes, he went back to his cab. As week after week, four

in all, passed, and I did not see him, I thought it strange and made enquiries of one of his pals. The latter, a man named Robinson, then informed me that my cabby friend was dead.

"Dead!" I exclaimed. "I am sorry. When did he die?"

"Why, just two weeks ago, yesterday," Robinson replied, promptly. As this was the ominous date specified in the poor cabby's dream, I said to Robinson:

"Are you sure?"

"Yes," he replied, "I am sure, because the very same day poor Bill died, my wife was taken seriously ill with the 'flu, and the two things combined gave me no end of a shock, I can tell you."

Well, I certainly sympathized with my cabby friend's pal, for poor Bill's death had given me a shock, too, albeit of a different sort.

CHAPTER XXI

SOME CORNISH GHOSTS

When I had been in York Road for about a year, finding it quite impossible, through lack of influence, to obtain employment on the staff of a London newspaper, I followed the advice of a fellow-student at Pitman's and registered my name at an educational agent's in Sackville Street.

Schoolmastering was not a very popular profession in those days (from what I hear it is scarcely more so to-day), and I obtained, without much difficulty, a post as assistant master in a grammar school in the Midlands. What would assistant masters say nowadays, I wonder, to a salary of £30 a year, out of which one had to pay travelling expenses? But that was all I got, and I had to work pretty hard for it: since, besides the work in school hours, I had to take early morning and alternate evening preparation, and play games with the boys on half-holidays.

Fortunately for myself, I was fond of games, and I really enjoyed coaching the boys in cricket and football and acting as umpire or referee in their matches.

As was, and still is, the case in many secondary and private schools discipline, in this school to which I refer, was entirely lacking, and it was due, in this instance, to the headmaster's fear of punishing his

pupils severely, lest he should lose them. The boys knew this, of course, and acted accordingly. They knew exactly what to expect when reported ; a " pi jaw," at which they laughed heartily afterwards, and, far from reforming, behaved worse then ever. The headmaster's wife was even a bigger " culp " than her husband, and proved a veritable thorn.

She seemed to resent my having any authority at all with the boys, and often quite openly encouraged them to be rude and disobedient.

My colleague was also an old Cliftonian. Having been to Cambridge, and taken his degree, he took the higher forms in the school (by the way, as a disciplinarian, he was even less successful than I), and besides coaching the boys in gymnastics, taught them boxing, the latter accomplishment being one in which he prided himself he was particularly efficient. Hence, a few nights after my arrival, he suggested that I should accompany him to the gymnasium and have a few lessons in the noble art of self-defence, and I accepted his invitation accordingly. Though shorter than I, he was a good deal heavier and more muscular, and after a round or two I was very glad to retire. Now, I soon discovered that my colleague was of a very jealous disposition and that he did not like my taking so much interest in the school games, as it was through games that the greatest influence with the boys was obtained. In these games he and I always played on opposite sides, and always at football, whenever he got a chance, he went for me for all he was worth.

Happening to learn, one day, that he was boasting how easily he could beat me in boxing, and that he intended asking several of his friends to see his

next bout with me, I resolved that I would, if possible, disappoint him. Consequently, I spent the little spare time I had in improving my boxing by practising with the biggest boys in the school, and also with a few friends in the town, and then when the momentous event came off, although my efforts did not result in a brilliant victory for me, I at least had the satisfaction of giving my opponent quite as much as he gave me, so that the fight, for fight it really was, ended in a tie. Unfortunately, this bout made us no better friends, and my colleague, not caring to box with me again, chose other and more subtle vents for his animosity. I was only at this school two terms, and I gladly hailed the day when the time came for me to leave. After more experiences in several other schools, I came to the conclusion that I had had more than enough of schoolmastering and resolved to go on the stage. With this end in view, I became a pupil at the Henry Neville Dramatic Academy in Oxford Street, then the principal training school for the stage in London. At first I studied under Mr. Fred Gartside, Henry Neville's brother, and when he retired, under Mr. G. R. Foss. Though subsequent experience has made me dubious as to whether dramatic academies afford the best training school for the actor, I cannot speak too highly of Mr. Foss, as a teacher, stage-manager and producer, for at the studio he was often called upon to play all three rôles.

Some trainers and producers think it essential either to storm and rave or to be sarcastic, but Mr. Foss was invariably patient and courteous. Indeed, I never heard him say an unkind word and he never even looked cross. All his pupils adored him, and

I am sure no man more thoroughly deserved his popularity. In later days, I had the good fortune, when playing, to be in the same caste as Mr. Foss, and as a fellow-actor I found him every whit as genial and sympathetic as he had been as a teacher, albeit I was small fry and he was playing one of the principal parts.

After I had been at the Dramatic Academy a year, I went on tour in a company run by very unpleasant people. The producer was, though a gentleman by birth, an out-and-out cad, bullying those he deemed he could bully with impunity, and toadying to the management and principals. The stage-manager, who had been a shopkeeper and never could be anything else, used to make love to the pretty girls in the crowd, and if they snubbed him, which they not infrequently did, he would trump up some tale about them to the management, thereby ensuring their dismissal.

Several of the girls were premium-payers, the arrangement being that they should pay a couple of guineas or so a week for the privilege of being in the show, and if at the end of a month they showed talent, they should be taken on at a regular salary. This, of course, was a mere "plant." The girls were invariably told at the end of the month that they were not suited for the stage, and given "the sack," and new premium-payers engaged in their place. I believe such methods of obtaining money from the stage-struck were not at all uncommon in those days and were still in vogue not so very long ago.

Despite the tyranny of the producer, who to vent his spleen on some wretched actor or actress who had chanced to offend him, used to call extra

rehearsals and bully everyone, the tale-telling of the stage-manager, who used to eavesdrop whenever he could, and thus curry favour with the management at other people's expense, the tiring train journey every Sunday, followed by the long tramp in search of rooms, and the not infrequent discomfort of the rooms, when at last they were found—despite, I say, of all this, I liked the life and derived no little interest and amusement from it. When I finally abandoned it and took to writing, I still kept in close touch with my stage friends and from time to time played small parts in West End productions. In addition to publishing several short stories, when I was on tour, I had written a novel called " For Satan's Sake," and on leaving the stage I lived for a while in Cornwall.

Ranger Gull, more widely known, perhaps, as Guy Thorne, happened to be there at the time and liked " For Satan's Sake " sufficiently to recommend it to his publisher. Thus it came about that my first attempt at a novel, after having been thrown aside for several years, finally found a market. It was extensively reviewed, and although my publisher affirmed that it was not a financial success, he nevertheless thought fit to ask me for three other novels, all of which he published in course of time. Two of them had been written, also, when I was on tour.

I had many encounters with ghosts, while living in Cornwall, which need not be wondered at, since Cornwall has always been a much-haunted county. Fishing was one of my favourite pastimes then, and after a day's sport with rod and line off the rocks at Lamorna Cove, where in those days there was no

hotel but only a few fishermen's cottages, I used to take a short cut through the fields to Paul, on my way back to Penzance. Now, I have described the route I took because, always when I arrived at a certain spot, I had the feeling that I was no longer alone, but that some strange thing belonging to the locality was walking with me.

I mentioned this fact to a Newlyn artist who knew the country and the short cut to Paul well, and he said he had experienced exactly the same thing in exactly the same spot. He also said that one of the old Lamorna fishermen had told him that the place always had been haunted ; and that his father had once seen the ghost there, and had been so frightened at the sight of it (its head was such a queer shape, quite unlike a human being's) that he would never cross those fields again after dark. The old fisherman, my artist friend said, could not account for the haunting ; but, for his own part, he was inclined to agree with me, that, as the neighbourhood of Lamorna Cove boasted several barrows, the haunting, in all probability, could be traced to them. If I have not already said so, I would here remark that ghostly phenomena of the Elemental type often occur in close proximity to old burial-places.

A weird spot in Cornwall that is well worth visiting is Castle-on-Dinas.

This is the remains of an ancient fort, presumably Roman, which stands on a hill some few miles from Marazion. Having heard that it was haunted, I went there alone one night and had a decidedly eerie experience. For some time after my arrival there nothing happened, and I was beginning to think that the rumours I had heard were baseless,

when I was suddenly startled by a whispering. I looked quickly all around me (every object within a considerable distance was plainly discernible in the moonlight), but I could see positively nothing to account for it. It continued, however, and I presently became conscious of innumerable invisible presences. I felt that their eyes were on me and that they were criticizing me. In addition to the whispering I heard occasional sighs and, once or twice, very faint laughter. For some time I felt quite unable to move, but my faculties finally reasserting themselves, I tore myself away from the spot and made precipitately for the valley beneath. I visited the hill several times afterwards and on one occasion made a very interesting discovery.

This was a flight of stone steps apparently leading down into the bowels of the earth. I descended several, and then drew back just in time, for the rest were submerged in water, which was so clear that I did not see it till I was on the step just above it. There was a great sense of loneliness about this spot, and such an uncanny silence, that I came away very much impressed, and was not surprised to learn that the country folk around regarded it with superstitious dread. They called it the Devil's Wheal, wheal being the local name for mine, and believed that it communicated in some way with the sea, but no one, they said, had been able to explore it, owing to the water, and that, they affirmed, was deeper at certain times of the day and year than at others.

I lived in several houses in St. Ives, which is only a few miles from Castle-on-Dinas, and in all of them had queer experiences.

In one of these houses, one that I had seen built—I was the first tenant—for some time there was no one else in it but myself and Esther Bolitho, my aged housekeeper. I slept alone on the top landing, and used to awake, always at about two o'clock, to hear strange footsteps coming up the stairs and pass along the passage outside my room, and sometimes I heard, also, the sound of heavy breathing and panting. I thought at first it was my housekeeper walking in her sleep, and, to make sure, the next time I was awakened by the footsteps, I jumped out of bed and opened my door ; but no one was there. Soon after this, Esther gave me notice to leave.

" I am very sorry to part from you," she said, " but I can't remain in the house any longer with those antlers." (I had a pair of old antlers from Ireland mounted on brackets in the hall.) " They are unlucky and the creatures they belong to walk about here at night."

" Why, what nonsense," I said, " you surely don't think the house is haunted ? "

" I know it is," she replied, " and it's haunted by those animals."

She then described the noises she had heard, and they were very similar to those I heard myself. I pressed her to stay, but it was of no use ; she went.

My next housekeeper was a middle-aged lady, a Mrs. Webbe. She was a Cockney, very dignified and practical. After she had been with me about a week, I was unexpectedly detained one night in Redruth and did not return home till early in the morning. To my surprise Mrs. Webbe was not in the house, but she arrived shortly, carrying blankets and sheets, etc., in her arms.

"Why, whatever's happened?" I asked, looking at the bed clothes she threw down.

"Oh," she said, with a deep sigh of relief, "I'm so glad you've returned. I simply daren't stay here alone, so I went to Mrs. Marble's last night, when you didn't return. I might as well tell you, sir," she added, "there's something very strange about this house. When I've been in the kitchen, after you've gone to bed, I've had the feeling that something very queer has come into the house, from the valley outside." (The house stood on a cliff.) "It's always been about the same time, between eleven and twelve o'clock, and I've often heard it walking about the house all night. I never thought there were such things as ghosts, but I'm quite sure there are now, and I've no hesitation in saying that this house is haunted."

She left me soon afterwards, and I engaged another housekeeper in her place.

So far the disturbances had been confined to the footsteps and heavy breathing already alluded to, but one night there were new and additional phenomena. I awoke about two o'clock as usual, and heard the footsteps coming up the stairs and into the passage, towards my room. When they arrived at my room, they stopped, and after a brief pause, during which I got the impression that something was listening, there was a tremendous bang at the top panel of my door.

After that there was silence. The noise startled me so much that it was some seconds before I could pull myself sufficiently together to get out of bed and open the door. The passage was flooded with moonlight, and through the open doorway of

the room opposite I could see the ivy leaves tapping softly against the window-panes, but that was all, there was no sign anywhere of the author of the disturbances.

The following night I set a trap. I not only sprinkled alternate layers of sand and flour on the floor of the passage, but I tied cotton across it and placed a table in it, with a cupful of water balanced on the edge of it, in such a manner that at the slighest touch it would fall off. Then I went to bed and waited.

At the usual hour I again heard the footsteps. They came unhesitatingly along the passage ; there was a crash, as if the cup had been knocked off the table on to the ground, the footsteps continued to advance, then, as usual, stopped at my room.

I got out of bed, and, as I did so, there was a tremendous bang at the top panel of my door. I threw the door open as quickly as I could, but there was no one, nothing there. The cotton was intact, the cup of water was in its place on the table, and when I examined the flour and sand, I found no trace of any footmarks. I never heard the bangs again, but the other disturbances went on during the whole term of my tenancy and were heard by quite a number of people, sometimes singly and sometimes collectively. After I left the house I heard several strange stories in connection with its site.

A Mrs. Ashby told me that one night, when passing by the spot upon which the house was afterwards built, she saw a very tall figure with a queer round head rise from the ground, walk across the road in front of her with a peculiar swaggering motion, and disappear abruptly over the

edge of the cliff. She added that she did not know it at the time, but only learned subsequently, that the cliff, according to local belief, was, and always had been, haunted.

Another lady, whom I met quite accidentally in Plymouth, told me that when on a visit to St. Ives, about twenty years previously, she, too, had seen an apparition on the spot now occupied by the house I had lived in, and from her description of what she saw, it was obvious that she and Mrs. Ashby had precisely the same experience; and she, like Mrs. Ashby, assured me that at the time she encountered the phenomenon she had no idea that the place was said to be haunted. As a matter of fact, she did not, then, she said, believe in ghosts, but now she had no hesitation whatever in saying that she had seen one.

In two other houses I rented in St. Ives queer things happened, occasionally.

One of these houses had been occupied by an eccentric old woman, and when her niece showed me over the house she remarked, with a look at the bare and rather gloomy staircase:

"I could never live here, I should always be seeing my aunt. She died in one of the rooms overhead, and I can see her now, coming down those stairs."

Well, I took the house, and although during my tenancy I never saw the old lady's ghost, I experienced one or two strange happenings of a somewhat unusual and remarkable nature. On one occasion a trap-door in the ceiling was opened very mysteriously, since the loft to which it had access did not communicate with the house next door, and it was inaccessible from below, while, on another

occasion, I found, on coming out of my bedroom in the morning, a rug spread out very carefully on the landing outside my door. As there was no one but myself and my wife in the house at the time and all the doors and windows in the lower part of the premises were securely fastened, it seemed to me that a solution to the mystery could only be in the superphysical.

It was while I was in this house that I was awakened one night by hearing the most appalling screams. If one can compare them to anything human at all, they sounded like a woman in the most awful physical and mental pain. They lasted for several seconds and then gradually died away.

On my getting up and going out on to the landing I found the rest of the household, numbering a good many at that time, collected there, listening. Fear was depicted on every face, and when I told them that I felt sure it was the Banshee, they all agreed that it must be, since the sounds were not human, and they had never heard anything in the least degree like them before. A day or two later, I received news of the death of my uncle in Limerick.

He was the senior member of our branch of the family, which, as I have said before, is the oldest branch of the O'Donnells of the North of Ireland.

I feel that I cannot close this chapter on St. Ives and the superphysical without a brief reference to the phantom ship that has, from time to time, visited the bay. A fisherman, who sometimes took me out in his boat, was once called upon to go to the rescue of a ship that had been burning lights as a signal for help to the westward of St. Ives Head. He and his comrades, he said, put off and when they

drew near to the vessel, they saw to their astonishment that her masts and riggings were covered with ice, as if she had encountered arctic weather. Also, no one was visible on her deck, and when they hailed her there was no reply. This struck them as very queer, but queerer things were to follow, for when the man in the bows of the St. Ives' boat stood up and tried to clutch hold of the bulwarks of the strange vessel, the latter suddenly and inexplicably vanished, and the St. Ives' man would have fallen into the sea, had he not been held by one of his mates. When this occurred, the men realized what they had seen was the famous phantom ship and lost no time in getting back to harbour. A few hours later a great storm arose and a ship was wrecked at Gwithian, everyone on board perishing.

According to my informant, the phantom ship is seldom if ever seen in St. Ives Bay, save before some local maritime disaster.

Just one more incident in the West, before I pass on to my subsequent experiences in London and other parts of England.

It happened whilst I was living in the house built on the haunted cliff. I had been working very hard, and feeling that I needed a rest, I decided to pass a week-end in Plymouth. I arrived there late one Saturday night, and after spending some time looking about for a room in the vicinity of Millbay Station, I eventually came upon an hotel that so attracted me that I decided at once to apply there for accommodation. In the vestibule I encountered an official whose face I seemed to know, and although I had never been inside the building before, it struck me as strangely familiar. In fact, I got a

very strong impression that I had known it in a former existence, and the more I saw of the place the stronger this impression grew. All the incidents I witnessed and the things that happened seemed but a reproduction of the past.

A green parrot in a cage in one of the rooms shrieked out, "William, you old blighter, lend me a sov," and then chuckled just like a human being; a dark eyed girl clerk smiled at me, as I passed her little office in the hall, and then began to hum an old and plaintive English air; and, as I entered the coffee-room, a black and white dog flew at a venerable and bald-headed gentleman and frightened him to such an extent that he scrambled into a chair and shouted frantically for help. Well, all these scenes seemed to me to be familiar; merely back history. I was conscious of having lived through them once before; I knew and anticipated all that was about to happen.

My dreams at night were strange; I fancied innumerable people glided noiselessly up to my bed and after gazing at me intently, glided away, only to make room for others, who came and went in the same manner; and, also, I kept on hearing music of a bygone date, and visiting houses and localities that I felt were once, in some peculiar way, associated with me. When, on the Monday morning, I left the hotel, I had been so uncannily at home in it that my departure seemed like parting from an old friend. The dog barked, the parrot screamed, and the girl in the office smiled, as I bade her good-bye; whilst the official in the vestibule whom I had, it seemed to me, so often seen in the past, beamed all over his face, when I told him that

I hoped to stay there again. But now comes the strangest part of it all. When next I visited Plymouth, a year or so later, that hotel was nowhere to be found. There was no building in the least degree like it in the street in which it had stood, and although I made endless enquiries of endless people, for I remembered every detail concerning it, no one to whom I described it had ever heard of such a place.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SKELETON AT THE WINDOW

On leaving St. Ives, I came to London and devoted much of my spare time to cases of hauntings that came to my notice and were open to investigation. One such case occurred in a house in Roehampton.

A lady who had read some of my books informed me that she had a house in Roehampton which she had been obliged to vacate on account of a haunting there, and asked me if I would care to spend a night in it. I accepted this offer, and all the more gladly, since I knew several people who were most anxious to pass a night in a haunted house with me.

Among those who accompanied me on this occasion, and sat up all night waiting for the ghost, which never made its appearance, were the late Lady Muir Mackenzie, Mr. C. Aubrey Smith, the well-known actor, Mrs. Leonard, the medium, and a prominent member of the Society for Psychical Research. From certain remarks made on our arrival by the caretaker, we fully anticipated some very startling phenomena, but we drew a blank and returned to our respective homes in the morning, sad, and weary, and dissatisfied, or rather only satisfied inasmuch as having tested the house thoroughly, we were satisfied that, in reality, it was not haunted at all. I caught the last 'bus from

Putney, and there being no other inside passenger I talked with the conductor and told him what I had been doing. To my surprise he neither took me for a fool nor thought that I was joking. After listening to me in all seriousness, he said, "I once had a funny experience on Wimbledon Common. I was going home across the Common one night, when I suddenly heard someone coughing very violently just behind me.

"I looked round, it was a clear, starlight night, but no one was to be seen.

"The coughing continued, however, and presently passed right by me, so close that it sounded almost in my ears, and then, when it got, maybe, six or seven yards ahead of me, it suddenly ceased. Two days after that, I got a letter to say that my brother, Sam, who was a miner in Durham, had been killed in a pit accident.

"Now, as the accident occurred at the very time that I had that experience on Wimbledon Common, and Sam's wife in her letter said that he had been troubled with a very bad cough for some months past, I couldn't help wondering whether it could possibly have been Sam, or rather his ghost, that I heard coughing."

"Is that your only experience of the supernatural?" I asked.

"The only one on Wimbledon Common," he said, "but they say, as perhaps you know, that the pond there is haunted."

This terminated our talk, as the 'bus just then came to a standstill, and during the next few weeks I had no time for my favourite pursuit; but as soon as I had a little leisure, I thought of what the conductor

had told me and, as the weather was warm, decided to spend a night on Wimbledon Common.

I went there one evening about half-past eleven o'clock, and at one found myself strolling along a path in the direction of the pond, which gleamed a ghostly white in the moonbeams. The Common was absolutely deserted, and the silence that reigned, unbroken save for the distant whistling of trains, seemed almost preternatural. My thoughts were far away, but they were brought back to earth pretty quickly, when a tall figure, with a ghostly white face, suddenly rose up from the ground and confronted me.

For a few moments I was petrified with fear, but when my startled senses had had time to recover and I looked more closely at the figure, I noticed it was grinning, and I grinned too. It was only a tramp, after all. Moreover, he proved quite a good fellow, despite his rags and dirt, and a few sandwiches, a pull at my whisky flask, and a little tobacco loosened his tongue-strings and made him decidedly sociable. He said he had once been a traveller for some educational firm in the West of England, but had lost his job owing to his propensity to gamble, which propensity he inherited from his forebears.

Heredity, he maintained, was responsible for half our woes, and he considered it was unjust to condemn people without first knowing their family history. On the subject of ghosts, however, I couldn't get him to talk at all seriously.

He was a materialist and did not believe in any hereafter. Nature, he argued, was the paramount power, and in none of his lonely wanderings and hours spent in solitary remote places had he seen or

heard anything to make him believe there was anything supernatural, or, as he corrected himself, superphysical.

"When I have finished here," he said, "I'm done and done with. Flowers or grass may spring from the spot where my body lies, but there will be no other life."

He told me quite a host of stories and anecdotes that may or may not have been original, but one or two of them at least are sufficiently amusing to repeat, and they are, perhaps, more than ordinarily interesting, if one takes into consideration the circumstances in which they were narrated. In my mind's eye I can still see this tall, gaunt tramp, sitting on a big stone by the moonkissed pond, a pipe in one hand and half eaten sandwich in the other, rattling out story after story. Occasionally he would stop, either to emit a hoarse chuckle or to blow his nose, producing for that purpose a quite new and immaculately clean handkerchief from his rags and tatters.

I noticed, in particular, two stories that he told, both related to Irishmen, and his imitation of the brogue could scarcely have been beaten by any stage star. The gist of them (respectively) was as follows:

Two Irishmen, both fresh from Galway, where they were small farmers, landed at Liverpool one day and sat down to their first English dinner. On the table was a jar of pickles containing chillies, which neither of the men had ever seen before. One of them put several of the chillies in his mouth at a venture and began chewing them.

"Glory be to God, Jim," his companion ejacu-

lated, " what is the matter with you ? Why are you crying ? "

" Why," gasped the other, trying to control his emotion, " I am crying at the recollection of my poor father. Ochone, ochone, he was hung this day, two years ago."

The meal proceeded, and soon the other Irishman made a dip into the pickle jar with a similar result.

" Musha, Mary," his comrade remarked. " What the divil ails you ? Why are you crying ? "

" Why, for sure," was the reply, " I'm crying because you were not hung when your father was."

The other story is brief.

" Pray, my good man," said a judge in Limerick Law Court to a witness, " what did pass between you and the prisoner ? "

" Och, then your worship. Sure I sees Murphy sitting on the top of the wall. ' Mick,' says he, ' What ? ' says I. ' Here,' says he. ' Where ? ' says I. ' Whist, whist,' says he. ' Hush,' says I. By the Holy Spirits above us, that's all I know about it, your reverence."

I saw no ghost on the Common that night, but the pond fascinated me so much that a few nights later I again visited it. I looked all around for my friend the tramp, but he was nowhere visible. Feeling tired, as I had been on my feet nearly all the day, I first of all sat on the ground, then stretched myself at full length, and finally went to sleep.

I had a strangely vivid dream. I thought I was in the kitchen of a large empty house, when I suddenly heard someone coming softly down the stairs leading to the basement. As I had made sure that I was alone in the house, I was very much alarmed, and

fearing the stranger, whoever he might be, had evil designs, I decided to hide. There were two large cupboards in the kitchen, one on either side the grate, and I hastily ensconced myself in the one nearest the window, pulling the door to and holding on to it like grim death. I had hardly done so before someone entered the kitchen, halted for a moment or two, as if deliberating what to do, and then very slowly and stealthily approached my hiding-place.

I now underwent an agony of suspense, which is simply indescribable. I expected every moment that the door of the cupboard I was in would be tried and that I should be discovered. To my intense relief, however, the footsteps went on again, and I heard this mysterious someone open the other cupboard and softly pull the door to.

A few minutes later, there were more footsteps, this time very slow and ponderous and suggestive of age, great age. They came with great difficulty and frequent halts down the stairs, along the stone passage, and finally into the kitchen.

I then heard the door of the other cupboard suddenly open and its occupant spring out. Sounds of a desperate scuffle followed; to be succeeded, a moment later, by a series of the most harrowing gasps and an abruptly terminating gurgle, that was only too significant. After a pause the footsteps again approached the cupboard where I was hidden, and a hand was laid on the door handle. I hung on to it with all my might, but I was no match in strength for the person pulling against me, and the door began to open. Then I awoke. It was all so real, and the terror it inspired so enduring, that I jumped up from the ground and left the Common with the

utmost precipitation. Back in the gaslit streets, I laughed at my fear, and walked leisurely to the nearest railway station, to hover around there till the arrival of the first morning train to Waterloo. The dream, however, had a sequel.

About three weeks later, I went to St. John's Wood to look over a house, with a view to renting it. Directly I crossed the threshold, I seemed to know the place, though I had never been in the road before, and when I entered the kitchen I recognized it at once as the kitchen of my dream. There, on either side the fireplace, were the two large cupboards.

As I stood looking at them, perplexed and fascinated, a horrible familiar sound suddenly arrested my attention. Footsteps, the same soft, surreptitious footsteps I had heard in my sleep, came creeping along the hall towards the head of the staircase. Panicstricken, as I had been, in my dream, I made a frantic dash for the cupboard near the window, and entered it. I pulled the door to, and as in the darkness I could see neither lock nor bolt, I held on to the handle with all my might.

The steps came stealthily down the stairs, along the stone passage and into the kitchen, just as they had done in the dream; they now paused awhile, and then began stealthily to approach the cupboard. Sooner than undergo again the torturing suspense that I had experienced in my sleep, I resolved to meet the mysterious intruder face to face, and, if necessary, make a determined fight for my life. Accordingly, I braced myself up, not, I admit, without a tremendous effort, and flung the cupboard door wide open. To my utter amazement,

I saw no one, nothing—the kitchen was absolutely empty. Only to a certain extent relieved, for I was convinced that the house was haunted, I lost no time in getting out of it. That the haunting should have been foreshadowed in my dream makes the whole thing to me, at least, doubly interesting. The house was probably over a hundred years old, and its early history, which I enquired into, was hopelessly wrapped in oblivion.

Hence, for all one knows to the contrary, the cause of the haunting may have been some grim and undiscovered tragedy enacted in the house in the past.

It was sold soon after my visit to it, but since then it has frequently been " to let."

Another house that is also very often to let is in the vicinity of Redcliffe Gardens, South Kensington. During the war, it was occupied by a well-known society lady, who invited me to sit up all night there with a party of people, on the chance of seeing or hearing the ghost that she declared haunted it.

Among other prominent members of society who sat up with me on this occasion, was the late Duke of Newcastle, who was opposed to spiritualism, but took a keen interest in hauntings.

At about midnight we distributed ourselves in different places, some in the hall, and some on the staircase, and the lights being lowered, we sat waiting and listening for the alleged phenomena. As minute after minute sped by without any psychic happening, I was beginning to think the ghost was fighting shy of us, when a loud scream from one of the ladies on the staircase made us all start to our

feet. The electric light was at once turned on, and the lady in question was found in a state of collapse. When she had recovered, she explained the cause of her alarm. She said that she had suddenly seen a skeleton face peering at her through the landing window. The owner of the house expressed great astonishment at this, as, hitherto, no such phenomenon had ever been witnessed either in her house or its grounds.

However, when it transpired that the lady who had seen the skeleton face was a prominent member of a certain "sisterhood" in Kensington that had figured in a recent sinister case, none of us were surprised that she had seen what she had seen. We were only surprised that she had not seen something far worse.

CHAPTER XXIII

SOME BLOOMSBURY AND OTHER HAUNTINGS

Since the war I had two other experiences in South Kensington. The first was very slight.

I was walking home one evening—I was living at the time in Upper Phillimore Place—with a member of the Studio Club, when a heavy rainstorm came on and forced us to seek shelter in the doorway of a house near Adelphi Terrace. The house was all in darkness, and we had just satisfied ourselves that it was quite empty and untenanted, when we suddenly saw through the glass by the side of the front door a gruesome blue light that moved slowly across the hall and then abruptly vanished. It conveyed with it a sense of eeriness and feeling of intense loneliness and depression to which we were both sensitive, and we came away convinced that there was something very queer about the place. When I passed by the house the following day, I saw that it was for sale, and, on enquiry at the agent's, learned that no one lived on the premises, not even a caretaker.

My other experience took place in the summer of 1924, in a flat in Redcliffe Square.

The owner of the flat, believing it to be haunted, invited me to spend an evening there, and to bring as many friends as I could with me. I accepted this

kind invitation, and among those who accompanied me to the haunted flat were Miss Myra Smith, a lady bookie, Miss Shanahan, a clever dress designer, and Col. R——, an old friend of mine whom I first met at the Authors' Club.

The owner of the flat having also invited several of her friends, including a " medium," we formed a fairly large party. For some time we sat listening to the medium trying to psychometrize. Her performance was about on a par with most performances of that kind, convincing only to those who wanted to be convinced ; and when midnight drew near we all went into the kitchen, to see if we could get any better results from table-turning, the most suitable table for that purpose being in the kitchen. We had been waiting in vain for half an hour or so, and the medium was talking with Mr. P. T. Selbit (of St. George's Hall fame), whilst the sitters chatted with each other, when Miss Myra Smith, looking somewhat startled, whispered to me that she saw a tall figure in the doorway. I looked at once ; there, as she had said, was a tall figure standing in the entrance to the kitchen. It was dressed in long, black, flowing robes, and had something that resembled a top hat on its head. Miss Shanahan, who was sitting near to me, saw the figure, too, but neither of us could see its face, as there was no light in front of it and only a dim light in the passage behind it. Our seeing this figure caused some consternation, and on some member of the party turning on the electric light the apparition, for apparition it was, vanished.

Miss Myra Smith stated that she did not see the figure's face very distinctly ; but she was sure, she

said, that it was looking at Col. R——, who was sitting next to her. No one else in the room saw it.

A few days later, Col. R—— died quite suddenly. Now, what makes this incident extremely interesting is what I am about to narrate.

A few weeks before the sitting at which this figure was seen, Col. R—— told me that, when in Tibet many years before, a lama had prophesied the dates upon which he, Col. R——, and a friend who was with him, would die; and he added, "In my friend's case the prophecy had proved correct. But," he went on laughingly, "although the fellow hit it off right with regard to my friend, I think he'll prove wrong with regard to myself, for according to him, my time is almost up. I am to die this year, I certainly never felt better in my life!"

This conversation, of course, came back to me the moment I heard of his death, and I asked a friend, who had travelled in Tibet and India, to give me a description of the lamas' dress. He did so, and informed me, quite voluntarily, that the head-dress of a lama was not unlike a top hat. Hence, taking all the circumstances into consideration, I cannot help thinking that the figure that Miss Smith, Miss Shanahan and I saw that night in the haunted flat, was the spirit of the lama who had prophesied Col. R——'s death.

During the war, ghosts seemed to be particularly active in London. In 1917, a fashionable dressmaker in Wigmore Street wrote to me saying that her flat was haunted. She said that always at about the same time, that is to say, between 11 and 12 at night, she heard someone enter the flat, and on looking over the banisters at the head of the stairs (her flat

comprised two floors) she saw a man in evening dress, standing in the hall.

He had a very white face and looked extremely dissipated. When he observed her looking at him, he invariably opened the front door and made his exit. She said she was sure it was some earthbound spirit, and asked me if I could lay ghosts. I said I could not, that in my experience ghosts were rarely, if ever, laid, but that, if she would permit me, I should like to visit her flat one night with a friend who was particularly interested in spontaneous psychic phenomena. She gave me a cordial invitation to come, and I at once communicated with the Duke of Newcastle, who had accompanied me to the house near Redcliffe Square.

As so often happens, however, in pyschic concerns, the ghost that had manifested so many nights in succession failed to put in an appearance on the night we visited the flat, and the worthy Duke went home greatly disappointed. However, we agreed to give it one more trial, and to meet at the flat again the following week.

When the evening arrived, I set out from home, and had got as far as the Marble Arch, when the signal to take cover was given, and all the thoroughfares were speedily deserted. Having made the appointment to be at Madame ——'s at a certain time, I hurried on, and got there just as the guns in the far distance commenced firing.

Despite the fact that neither the Duke nor the ghost turned up, the night proved extremely exciting, for the raid turned out to be one of the worst, and by the time I got home I had had many more thrills than I had wanted.

Talking of wartime experiences, I had one of a psychic nature when on sentry duty on Grosvenor Bridge. That also was in 1917. I was a private in the United Arts Volunteers at the time, and was on duty at the aforesaid Bridge, at what we used to term number two post. Facing me was a staircase, leading down into a kind of yard, where number three sentry, who was the nearest to me, was posted.

It was a fine night, a great silvery moon overhead, and the sky a mass of scintillating stars. London, as a whole, was sleeping peacefully, and everywhere appeared very still. Suddenly, steps began to ascend the stairs facing me.

They came up at a run and stopped at the top of the staircase. I felt someone was there confronting me, but I saw no one, nothing. That was all. A trivial enough incident, perhaps, yet at that hour and in that spot it left me feeling very uncomfortable, and I was not at all sorry when the relief came.

Footsteps are a very common phenomenon in hauntings. A few years ago I went to investigate a case of haunting in the top flat of a house near Selfridge's. Several people, including Mr. Arthur Sinclair, the popular Irish actor, accompanied me, and we stood at midnight on the staircase waiting for the ghost. After being there for some time, we heard footsteps ascending the stairs. They passed several of us, at very close quarters, and the banisters creaked ominously as if some heavy weight were being pressed against them; but none of us saw anything and nothing further happened. As in the case of the footsteps I heard on Grosvenor Bridge, this case sounds trivial enough now, when I come

to put it down in writing, but at the time the footsteps, actually heard ascending that long, winding staircase in the darkness of that big, deserted house, certainly woke a very real sense of fear.

On my next visit to this flat I was impressed, but in a different way. As before, several people accompanied me, and we were sitting in one of the rooms listening and waiting, when we again heard footsteps ascending the stairs. I now fully anticipated seeing a ghost, and having braced myself up for the encounter, I was feeling my way down the staircase in the direction of the steps, when a light suddenly shone in my face and a very solid voice exclaimed, "What are you doing 'ere?" I had run into the arms of a police sergeant and a constable, who finding the door of the house left slightly ajar, had entered the building, in the full expectation of catching a burglar. It took me some time to convince them that I was merely ghost hunting, and they left the premises, apparently somewhat dubious and certainly much disappointed.

To revert to psychic footsteps. A short time ago, I investigated a curious case of haunting in a flat near Theobalds Road, Holborn. The owner of the flat informed me that in the dead of night he had frequently heard footsteps ascend the main staircase of the house and halt outside his front door.

Sometimes he would hear them across the floor of his sitting-room, enter his bedroom, which communicated with the sitting-room, and approach his bed. Usually nothing further happened, but, on one or two occasions, he had felt hands on the bedclothes. Beginning at his feet, they felt their way stealthily up his body towards his head. I asked

him if he saw anything, and he said, " No, I was in such a fright that I ducked my head under the clothes and kept it covered up till I heard the steps go away." He said a friend who was staying with him did see something once. Hearing a noise in the sitting-room, he got out of bed, and, on opening the sitting-room door, saw a strange man, with a handkerchief bound round the lower part of his face, concealing it from view, walk across the room and, without making any attempt to open it, pass right through the front door.

These were the main phenomena. I did several sittings in the flat, but only on one occasion experienced anything I could not satisfactorily explain on natural grounds. I had two friends with me. One had stationed himself in the bedroom and the other, a house agent—house agents, by the way, are very often interested in hauntings, and have accompanied me on several of my expeditions—on the landing facing the main staircase of the building. I was alone on a bend of the stairs.

We did not commence our vigil till about one o'clock, when the house was absolutely still, and everyone in it, presumably, had gone to bed. After chatting with the house agent for some time, I had lapsed into silence, and I was actually beginning to nod, for I was very tired, when something roused me, and directly afterwards I heard footsteps on the staircase immediately beneath me. They sounded muffled, as if someone in bare or stockinged feet was trying to disguise them. On and on they came, right up to where I was standing, and then halted. I touched the button of my electric torch, but nothing was to be seen.

The house agent had heard the steps, too. He received the impression that the author of them was some very gross person who was muffling them on purpose. We were both of the opinion that strange though the sounds attributable to the acoustic properties of a house may be, and often are, the acoustic properties of this house were not responsible for the sounds we had heard in it, which we felt certain were solely due to the superphysical.

I also heard ghostly footsteps in a house in Red Lion Square. I was alone there one evening in May (I shared this upper part of the house with a friend, who was away at the time), and was sitting in my bedroom, which was on the top floor. The two floors immediately beneath our flat, being let out as offices, were unoccupied after six o'clock. A caretaker, his wife and daughter lived in the basement, but on this occasion, as I learned afterwards, they were out; hence, I was quite alone in the building. It was a beautiful evening. The golden sunshine came pouring into my bedroom through the open windows; and the square resounded with the discordant shouts of the hordes of children who use the square's garden as a playground. I was listening to their din, and thinking what a pity it is the children of the poor are allowed to run absolutely wild in this country—erroneously supposed to be one of the most civilized in the world—and be a general nuisance, when I heard heavy footsteps on the uncarpeted stairs. The staircase, by the way, was of black oak, and a very fine one.

Well, the footsteps came slowly and wearily up, suggesting to my mind some old and decrepit man. I wondered who it could be, as I was not expecting

any visitors, and I sat and listened till the steps crossed the landing immediately below me and began to ascend the staircase leading to my room. I then got up and going out of the room, looked down the stairs. To my surprise, I saw no one. As I stood there, wondering what had become of the person, the steps suddenly began to descend. I followed just behind them, right down to the ground floor and along the passage to the front door, where they abruptly ceased.

At the time I had no idea the house was known to be haunted, but I subsequently heard that the caretaker's daughter had often seen the phantom of an old man on the staircase, and in various other parts of the building.

Also, the people who took the "upper part" after my friend and I had vacated it, told me that they had several times heard mysterious footsteps on the staircase, and added that on one occasion a very queer thing had happened.

A young man who was visiting them, seeing a strange old man coming up the stairs, spoke to him and asked him what he wanted. Whereupon the old man replied, "Oh, it's all right," and turning round, walked slowly down. Thinking this somewhat strange, the visitor followed him, and saw him suddenly and inexplicably disappear in the passage leading to the front door.

The young man, they said, was convinced that the figure he had seen was superphysical. I omitted to say that my wife had an experience in the house one evening. At about eight o'clock, the time when the footsteps were generally heard, as she was going down the stairs to the front door, there was a thud

just behind her, as though some heavy object had fallen from a height on to the stairs, and it frightened her so much that she dared not return up the stairs alone. She waited in the hall till I came home.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, no tragedy is known to have occurred in the house, but as it is probably a hundred and fifty years old, even older, perhaps, some unknown and undiscovered crime may have been committed there. At the same time, hauntings may arise from a dozen and one causes ; and, contrary to the popular belief, they are by no means always due to deeds of violence.

I tried to persuade the tenants to whom I have referred to allow me to do an all-night sitting there, but they refused, for fear of upsetting their landlord ; and they were right, of course, for no landlord likes a rumour getting abroad that his house is haunted. People often write to me asking me to give them the address of some haunted house, and I invariably refuse, because, were I to comply with their request, the landlord of the property might bring an action against me for slander of title. This actually happened in the case of the late poet and dramatist, Mr. Stephen Phillips.

Mr. Phillips had to pay damages for circulating the statements that the house he lived in, in Egham, was haunted, although the experiences he had had there would seem to have warranted such statements.

Apparently " libelling " a house is every whit as expensive as " libelling " a person ; and one has to be careful, very careful, with regard to both.

I investigated yet another case of haunting in Central London. Some years ago, two ladies

occupied a flat near the British Museum. One of them was in the habit of attending séances. As so often happens, from hearing or imagining she heard knockings and spirits voices at séances, she took to hearing or imaging she heard them in her flat. She said the voices were those of her friends who had passed over and that they wanted her to join them on the other side. Consequently, when her friend was away, she did join them on the other side. At any rate it is presumed she did.

She locked herself in her bedroom, and sometime later, someone staying in the house smelling gas very strongly on the landing outside the lady's room, informed the landlord, who, aided by a policeman, forced the door open and found the lady spiritualist lying on the bed, dead. The flat then stood empty till I heard of the case and rented it. I slept in the room where the tragedy occurred for some months, but only occasionally had experiences which I could say, for certain, were due to the superphysical.

They all happened when I was alone in the flat. For example, on two successive mornings I awoke at the same hour, that is to say about four o'clock, to feel a sharp tug at the bedclothes covering my right shoulder.

On both occasions I looked round at once, but saw nothing. Yet I felt sure something was there, close beside me, trying to get into communication with me. On several occasions, when about to enter the flat, of which I was the only occupant, I heard sounds like footsteps inside and could have sworn that some presence was on the other side of the door, listening. No one took the flat after I left,

and the whole house now is converted and used as business premises.

I will terminate this chapter with an incident that occurred the night before the Delphic Club transferred its quarters from Regent Street to Jermyn Street.

As several of the members declared that they had had uncanny experiences in the old quarters, I resolved to do a night's vigil there, before the removal took place. Two lady members of the club volunteered to join me, and the three of us met there and sat in the hall, or rather on the landing, for the club occupied the third and fourth storey, and its premises were not self-contained, at about eleven o'clock. In rather more than an hour's time, during an interval of silence (we had been talking), we heard a click in one of the rooms, and the electric light in that room was suddenly switched on. That was all.

In the dead of night, however, and in a practically empty building—for it was empty save for myself and my two companions—it had a decidedly eerie effect, and brought our vigil to an abrupt end.

CHAPTER XXIV

SOME EXPERIENCES IN THE SOUTH

In the South of England, not very far from Wells, a house has long borne a widespread reputation of being haunted. It is a low, rambling, medium-sized building, with a rather fine old oak staircase and a number of equally fine oak-panelled rooms. It adjoins a churchyard and confronts a wooded park, where a number of beautiful deer wander at large. I do not know the age of the house, but I believe it was built about the beginning of the eighteenth century, perhaps a little earlier, on the site of an ancient mansion.

Among the various stories in circulation with regard to it, is one concerning two brothers.

The elder of them, it is said, visited the other in the house one day and was never seen afterwards, the general supposition being that he was murdered in what is now termed the haunted room, and buried somewhere on the premises. There may, of course, be no truth whatever in the tradition, but some at least of the ghostly phenomena that from time to time take place there are popularly attributed to it.

Another of these stories affirms that, long ago, an old woman was crushed to death in a gateway on the estate by some member of the family, the deed being attributed either to revenge or to some sudden act of anger or folly.

This again may be, and very likely is, pure romance; but, anyhow, it is believed by people in the surrounding villages and her ghost haunts the place periodically.

About twenty years ago, having obtained permission of the owners of the property to do an all-night vigil there, I went to the house accompanied by two men friends. Midnight found us in the deep, dark cellars of the building, adjoining the vaults of the old church. Overhead the big clock boomed twelve, an owl in some near tree hooted, and a far-off dog baye dthe moon—in the circumstances uncanny sounds all; they nevertheless failed to bring the ghost, and after remaining in the cellars for a few minutes longer we adjourned to the haunted chamber.

This room, one entrance to which faces a long corridor, possesses some peculiarities. Under the floor, for instance, is a deep cavity known as the priest's hiding hole, which communicates with other secret spots in various parts of the building. Also, in a line with each other, across the centre of the floor, some few feet apart, stand two rather curious pillars, and a second doorway leads into what is styled a powder closet.

We brought chairs with us. I sat facing the window, and one of my companions faced the powder closet, whilst the other sat about midway between us.

At my particular request the former brought his dog and the latter his camera.

The shutters of the room were closed, so as to exclude any tricks of the moonlight, and we sat in absolute darkness. About two a.m. the dog began to

whine and snarl savagely, and almost directly afterwards one of the men uttered an ejaculation. Confronting us, by the doorway leading into the corridor, was a tall, luminous thing, in shape not unlike one of the pillars. It moved very slowly, and passing the door leading to the powder closet, it went on at a snail's pace towards the window on the opposite side of the room. After it had gone some little distance, I addressed it, asking it to tell us who or what it was and why it was there. There was no reply. I then asked it to knock on the wall or floor, and again there was no response of any kind. One of my companions also asked it questions, with the same result. Continuing to move, the thing kept approaching the aforesaid window, and when close to it abruptly disappeared. We all three saw it simultaneously and were of the opinion that it was some kind of superphysical demonstration.

Some months after this visit I went to the house again, accompanied, this time, by three men, one of whom was a chartered accountant in Wells.

It was in September. The day had been sultry, and at about eleven o'clock a thunderstorm, accompanied by wind and rain, broke out. As before, we had a dog and a camera with us. Having searched the house to satisfy ourselves that no one was concealed in it, we adjourned to the haunted chamber and having, as before, closed the shutters we sat down, at some little distance from one another. As on the previous occasion, I faced the window. The night proved noisy. Outside the thunder pealed incessantly, the rain beat against the window-panes, while the wind moaned and whistled dismally down the chimney. Inside, doors and windows jarred and

rattled. Now, having come to the conclusion from certain of my previous experiences, that a disturbed state of the elements was favourable for, if not conducive to, psychic manifestations, I considered the present conditions pretty well ideal and said so to my companions.

During brief lulls in the storm we occasionally heard footsteps, and we got the impression that someone or something was moving about stealthily in our midst. Indeed, so convinced was I that this was the case that every now and then I pressed the button of my torch. Always, however, with the same result—my companions were all in their seats in attitudes of tense expectation, nothing was to be seen moving. As time wore on and nothing further happened, we gradually dropped off to sleep, to be abruptly wakened by a loud, continuous ringing. For a minute or so, none of us could make out whence the sounds came, and then, suddenly, someone suggested it was the front door bell.

We then, in a body, went down the long corridor and the broad oak stairs into the hall, which in the gloom appeared immense, and thence, keeping very close to one another, to the front door.

"Who's there?" I called out, and much to my relief a very human voice replied, none too grammatically, "It's only me."

It then transpired that it was a friend of the chartered accountant, who was so keen on joining in the ghost hunt that he had walked all the way from Bath, a distance of some miles. As he said he was a sceptic and didn't mind where he sat, I suggested he should sit in the corridor at the head of the main staircase. He willingly assented, and leav-

ing him there, we retraced our steps to the haunted room. Again a long wait, and then—an excitement. This time it was caused by the man in the corridor suddenly crying out, " Help, help ! " We ran at once to his assistance, only to find, however, that it was a false alarm. Tired out with his long tramp, the chartered accountant's friend had fallen asleep and had had a nightmare. " I dreamed," he said, " a tall figure came flying downstairs and leaping over me went bounding on into the room where I had left you all sitting." Now, this dream struck me as odd, because one of the ghosts that was said to haunt the house was a tall figure that bounded up and down the stairs and along the corridor in the manner described. However, the young man maintained that it was only a dream, and we returned to the haunted room, leaving him in the corridor.

Another long wait, and then, as the clock struck four, the chartered accountant exclaimed, " I shall have to be going. I take it nothing will happen now as it's morning ; besides, I have to be at the office at—— " Here he stopped short, and then crying out, " Oh, my God, what's that ? " began to pant and gasp. Simultaneously, the dog we had with us snarled and then whined, and I saw in front of me a red, rectangular light, about six and a half or seven feet from the floor, and in about the middle of the room. One of my companions cried out he saw something, too. I stood up and addressing the red light, asked it who and what it was. There was no reply. I said we had come there in a friendly spirit, and asked if there was anything we could do for it. Still no reply.

" If you can't speak," I said, " will you knock or rap on the floor or wall." Still no response.

The chartered accountant now became so agitated that, fearing some harm might befall him if his equilibrium were not soon restored, I stopped and lighted a candle. The red light then instantly vanished. The man in the corridor, who, hearing voices and seeing our room lighted up now joined us, had seen nothing. The chartered accountant, whom we besieged with questions, described what he had seen thus :[1] " It was a tall, luminous figure," he said. " It seemed to emit a light from all over it. The body was covered with black and white streaks, possibly it was a check suit. That I cannot say, for it was the face that arrested my attention most. It was very long and swarthy. The skin was drawn very tightly over the bones, which gave it a skull-like appearance. I saw no actual eyes, only large sockets, which appeared to be aglow with light, but it gave me the impression of being intensely malevolent and antagonistic."

Another of the three men I brought with me saw the figure, and described it in much the same language ; but the third remaining man in my party, who was present when the phenomena appeared, said that he only saw a kind of luminous mist which seemed to move toward the spot where I sat and disappear behind me. I asked the accountant if he could bear sitting in the dark again, and on his assenting, I blew out the candle. Almost directly I had done so, the dog growled, and I again saw a red light suddenly appear in the middle of the room.

[1] He subsequently sent his description of the phenomenon to the owner of the property.

The accountant, however, cried out immediately, "It's there, it's there. I can't stand it. Light the candle." I at once switched on my torch, and the light vanished. No one felt inclined to remain in the room any longer. We now came away, and were not at all sorry to find ourselves once more in the open.

Some time after this, the late Lord Curzon of Kedleston wrote to me saying he intended to spend a night in the house with some friends of his, and asked me to accompany him and procure some competent photographer. I approached one in the neighbourhood, and told him what I wanted him to do. He was very "material" in appearance. "Take a ghost," he ejaculated. "Well, that beats anything I've ever heard. How can I photograph what doesn't exist?"

"You don't believe in ghosts?" I exclaimed.

"Of course not," he answered. "There are no such things."

"Then you won't come? Lord Curzon will pay you well."

"What, pay me for nothing?"

"Why, certainly, if you like to put it that way. Ghosts don't always appear to order."

"Very well, then," he said, looking at me somewhat askance. (I could plainly see that he thought it best to humour me, as I was undoubtedly an escaped lunatic.) "I'll come."

He kept his word, however (presumably, by making enquiries he was able to verify much of what I had told him), and, although a sceptic, took infinite pains to accomplish what was desired of him, even if he did not thoroughly enter into the spirit of the thing.

The sitting began at about ten o'clock. When one o'clock arrived and nothing at all mysterious had happened, several of the sitters suggested that we should end the vigil, and, the majority then voting in favour of this proposition, much to my disappointment, we came away, at an hour when ghostly phenomena very often occur. The camera had been exposed during the sitting, but the result was a blank. I might add that upon each of my former visits to the house a camera had been exposed with a similar result. Very soon afterwards, I went to the house again, and this time did an all-night sitting in the haunted room, with only two friends.

At about 1.30 both told me they saw a number of various coloured lights, of a spherical shape, floating about the room, and one of them, an author and journalist, took a flashlight photograph of them. Nothing else happened. The author sent me one of the photos he took, and it showed some curious markings on it that certainly looked like lights, but whether these markings were due to accident or not neither he nor I could say.

That was my last investigation of that haunting. The owner of the property, who, by the way, does not reside there himself, told me that, when living in the house a good many years ago, he awoke one morning to see a skull-like face pressed close to his. As he stared at it in horror, it gradually receded, and kept on receding till it disappeared altogether. He witnessed the same phenomena several times, and as other members of the household experienced certain other ghostly happenings there, the house was vacated, and the family have never resided there since.

After our visit to this house, Lord Curzon insisted on my taking him to a house in Clifton, Bristol, which was empty and had long borne the reputation for being haunted. It was in a terrace, not far from the Suspension Bridge, and it probably dated back to somewhere about 1780. The hauntings, however, did not break out until during the last occupier's tenancy; or, if they did break out prior to that time, I have not been able to trace any record of them.

What happened was this: Before taking the house, the last tenant, on going to view it one day, saw a lady dressed all in black standing in one of the rooms. She had her back to him, and, obviously unaware of his presence, was arranging her hair under her hat. Thinking she must be some prospective tenant, like himself, come to see over the house, he was about to make his whereabouts known, when, to his astonishment, she vanished. Being a very matter-of-fact, practical fellow, not at all superstitious, he thought it queer, but concluding that he had been the victim of some peculiar kind of hallucination or illusion, he dismissed the matter from his mind, and continuing his survey of the house, eventually took it. He had not been in it long, however, before his adventure with the lady in black was vividly recalled to him by certain queer happenings. One evening his wife and little boy and another lady heard a strange, ominous cry. It seemed to pass right through the room, and left them considerably startled.

On another occasion, the same little boy and his brother saw a lady in black holding a small boy by the hand standing in the doorway staring at them.

They called out, and on their mother running upstairs to see what was the matter, the lady and boy disappeared.

From the description the two children gave of the lady, it was apparently the same figure their father had seen when he was looking over the house. It was in black and presented the appearance of just a very ordinary modern woman.

There were other more remarkable phenomena. For instance, every night, about the same hour, footsteps were heard running up the stairs from the hall to the landing on the first floor. Sounds like the winding of a big clock were next heard, and when these sounds ceased, the steps recommenced and were heard ascending the stairs to the next floor. Arriving there, they ran across the landing to the bathroom, the door of which was heard to open and shut, and then commenced bounding about on the floor. On one occasion, a hospital nurse, who was staying in the house, hearing what she thought was a clock on the landing being wound up, and wondering who could be doing such a thing at such an hour, after everyone had gone to bed, opened the door of her room and looked out. What she saw gave her a shock. A strange looking shadowy figure was in the act of mounting the staircase leading to the floor immediately overhead. Its back being towards her, she could not see its face, but the thing, as a whole, gave her the impression that it was very evil and grotesque, more like some huge, horrible ape than a human being. It went up the stairs two or three at a time, and she heard it open and shut the bathroom door and then bound about all over the floor.

Also, footsteps, accompanied by heavy breathing, were sometimes heard in the daytime, ascending the stone steps leading from the cellar to the passage on the ground floor, between the morning-room and the kitchen; and on one or two occasions a very indistinct shadowy form, which may have been the same thing the nurse saw, was seen to rush along the aforesaid passage and disappear in the kitchen. At other times, a voice calling out "Henry!" was heard proceeding, apparently, from the chimney in one of the rooms. There may have been other phenomena, but this is all I have noted down. The incidents I have recorded here were related to me by the man who took the house, his wife, and sister-in-law. It was because the case was so well attested and so well known in Clifton at the time, that I chose it for investigation with Lord Curzon.

He and another man joined us at our hotel near the Clifton Downs and we all three dined there together. Lord Curzon was in a happy mood, and kept me well plied with champagne.

"You will need some fortifying if we see the ghost," he laughed, "so it's just as well to be prepared." After dinner, he rather staggered me by suggesting we should get a lady with a dog to accompany us. The only lady that I could think of just then who had a dog was Mrs. Green Armitage, the writer of more than local renown; but it was after ten o'clock, and as I did not know her very intimately, I did not like to call on her at that hour. However, as Lord Curzon was bent on having a lady and a dog, I thought I must commandeer her services somehow, so I sent a boy from the hotel round to her house with a note. I was on a ghost

hunt with Lord Curzon and someone else, I said, and we would be so pleased if she could join us, and bring her dog. As she was doubtless aware, dogs were excellent psychic barometers. To my surprise and intense relief, she arrived at the hotel with her dog within half an hour.

The house to which we now adjourned certainly looked haunted. It was in a most forlorn and dilapidated condition, the paper in some of the rooms was dropping from the walls, cobwebs festooned the ceilings, window-panes were broken, while doors and floorings were covered in places with huge, repulsive-looking fungi.

Lord Curzon and Mrs. Green Armitage sat on camp stools at the head of the cellar steps, while the other member of the party and myself occupied seats close at hand. As nothing ghostly happened and Lord Curzon was too tired to sit up longer, we came away soon after one o'clock. When we reached the hotel, and I had said good night to Mrs. Green Armitage, Lord Curzon suddenly remembered he had left his slippers in the haunted house and asked me if I would kindly go back for them, as they were old friends and he did not wish to lose them. I assented, of course, but I did not at all like the idea of going back to that house alone ; and it was not without considerable trepidation that I opened the front door and stepped into the gloomy hall.

I fully expected to see or hear a ghost, but in this I was happily disappointed, and having found the shoes, I got back to the hotel without mishap. In the morning Lord Curzon went with me to see the Clifton Suspension Bridge, which he had never

seen before. His comments on it were characteristic of the Lord Curzon that is, perhaps, best known to the public.

I forget the exact words he used, but they were to the effect that he found both the bridge and the gorges, which I pointed out to him with great pride, extremely disappointing. Moreover, his manner seemed to suggest it was quite my fault the bridge was not higher and the gorge grand like those he had seen in India, and it made me feel very like a rebuked, and by no means an efficient guide. All the same, he was soon chatting away as jovially as ever and saying how thoroughly he had enjoyed his two ghost hunts. From my experience of him, Lord Curzon, I believe, was a genuine and quite open-minded investigator. He was interested in spontaneous psychic phenomena, but never said anything from which I could infer that he was interested in what is popularly termed spiritualism.

After we had parted at the hotel I never saw him again, though I received several friendly letters from him.

CHAPTER XXV

A HAUNTED AVENUE IN KENT AND THE GHOST OF FRED ARCHER

To revert for a moment to the haunting detailed in my last chapter, I omitted to mention that one of our English Princesses is said to have had a rather thrilling experience in the house near Wells. She was a guest in the house at the time. One day, when she and another guest were descending the main staircase together, they both heard footsteps bounding down the stairs after them, but on turning round saw nothing. They thought it extremely odd, especially as there was no one in the house at all likely to behave in such a tomboyish manner, but eventually came to the conclusion that the occurrence must have been due to some obscure idiocyncrasy in the acoustic properties of the house. I believe Monsigneur Benson and also a former Roman Catholic Bishop of Clifton stayed in this house, with a view to investigating the phenomena, and the latter, it was rumoured, either saw or felt some very alarming presence in one of the rooms and essayed to lay it, but somewhat ignominiously failed. I did nine investigations there, in all, but only on three occasions—to which I have already referred—did anything of a ghostly nature happen. One of my most recent uncanny experiences was in the avenue of a private house near Maidstone.

The house has a history. About 1812 the owner of it went on a visit to some friends, leaving two women servants in the house to look after it. Fearing burglars and thinking to outwit them, supposing they did break in, the two women hid all the silver in the house in the kitchen oven. However, one of them, in a fit of absent-mindedness, lit the kitchen fire, and the silver, of course, was very badly damaged. They were then, it seems, so fearful of the consequences, for servants, in those days, were not treated as considerately as they are now, that they drowned themselves in a lake in the grounds.

Afterwards, a beautiful avenue leading to this lake acquired the reputation for being haunted, and it has been so reputed ever since.

A few years ago, a lady visitor at the house was found lying in the avenue in a dead faint. On recovering consciousness, she told a strange tale. She said that, as she was walking up the avenue, she suddenly saw a woman, clad in a very old-fashioned dress and wearing a kind of mob-cap, approach her. As they drew nearer to one another, the visitor saw the woman's face very distinctly, and it was so altogether horrible that she fainted. After this, various people saw the same figure, always in the avenue, but not always at the same time.

It sometimes appeared in broad daylight. A gentleman who saw it one afternoon preceding him up the avenue, and consequently with its back turned to him, thought at first that it was merely some eccentrically clad member of the household, but later, when he heard about the haunting, of which he was entirely ignorant on the occasion referred to, he was convinced from the description

that was given him of it, that he had, on the said occasion, actually seen the ghost. With these stories fresh in my mind, I did a nocturnal vigil in the avenue and grounds of the house one autumn evening three years ago. I must confess I did not altogether enjoy it.

Though the weather was fine and the air very sweet and fresh after London, there was a strange sense of loneliness about the place which I found exceedingly depressing; furthermore, the shadows from the trees on the white moonlit soil and the rustling of the leaves and branches in the gentle breeze had such a ghostly effect that I constantly expected some uncanny creature to spring suddenly out on me from the bushes, and more than once my heart beat violently, as some wild animal, probably a rabbit, broke through the brushwood and darted across the roadway in front of me. The feeling of eeriness, however, was worst by the water. There was a ghostly glimmer on it, and I could feel something beside me, something bizarre and evil, that had its home there and was doing its utmost to persuade me to throw myself in.

Indeed, so strong a fascination did that black, silent pool soon exercise over me that I had to exert no little will power to drag myself away from it and return to the avenue. On my coming thither, I came to a part where several paths met, and I was deliberating which one of them to take, when I heard footsteps pattering along one of the paths towards me.

They came very rapidly, as if someone was in a great hurry, but I could see nothing. When they were close to me, I instinctively drew back to let them

pass by, but, all the same, I felt someone bump into me. The footsteps went on, and gradually died away in the distance. I walked about the avenue for some time after that, but nothing further happened. I believe that what I heard and felt was an actual ghost, but whether it was the same ghost that other people had seen and that, for some reason, it had not on this occasion chosen to manifest visually, I cannot, of course, say. Though I have not been permitted by the present occupants of the house to give any names, I can guarantee the case to be absolutely genuine.

That it is unwise to give the real name of a haunted property or of anyone who is in any way connected with a haunting has been taught me by bitter experience. Last summer, one of the Northampton papers published a long account of certain ghostly manifestations in the village of Guilsborough, where I had just bought a house. Not content even with mentioning property belonging to some of my relatives, they published a photograph of it, surreptitiously taken by one of their reporters, and without asking my permission referred to some of the experiences I had once had in the locality and had published some years previously. As a result, not only was my relative's house besieged by people wanting to see the ghost, but the children were so scared that for some time they dared not venture out alone after dark. For all this I was quite wrongly held responsible by certain of the more ignorant of the villagers and subjected to so much annoyance that I had in the end to lodge a strong appeal with the Northampton County Police. I shall refer to the hauntings very briefly here, as I consider that

they have already received, as I have just suggested, too much publicity. Apart from the ghost of a lady in white that is alleged to haunt Nortorft Hill and one of the adjacent fields, an old burial-ground in the village boasts an Elemental of a very alarming nature that has occasionally been seen, too, in the bedroom of a house at the other end of the village. I speak of the latter from personal experience, because I once saw what I believe to have been this Elemental.

I was walking past the burial-ground very late one night, many years ago, when I saw a tall figure standing in the roadway. I did not look at it very closely, for I admit I was too scared, but the impression I got was that it was only semi-human in appearance, the body to some degree resembling that of a human being, but the face being more like that of some very strange animal. It struck me as being wholly diabolical. I did not know at the time that my father-in-law had seen an exactly similar phenomenon many years previously, in the house I have alluded to, in quite another part of the village.

Guilsborough is by no means the only village in the Pytchley Hunt district that can boast of hauntings. Many years ago, considerable interest was aroused by ghostly happenings in Barby, while more recently the phantom of Squire Arnold holding his head under his arm and mounted on a phantom horse was said to haunt a lane in the immediate vicinity of Ashby St. Legers. By the way, some of my readers may recall that, according to Mr. John Ingram[1], Althorp House, the seat of the Spencers, has been haunted by the phantom of a stableman,

[1] *Vide* " The Haunted Houses of Great Britain."

while it was at Daventry that the apparition of Lord Strafford is said to have appeared to Charles I just before Naseby.

In the Midlands also, if not exactly in the Pytchley district, is the scene of alleged hauntings last year by the ghost of poor Fred Archer, who in the later seventies and early eighties of last century won a fame that bids fair to be immortal in the turf world. For the benefit of those of the present generation who may not be, as yet, well versed in the annals of sport, and also in order to elucidate the story of the hauntings, I must first of all give a brief sketch of the famous jockey's career. He came to the front about 1874, and during the next ten years steered no less than 2,157 horses to victory. In 1880, he created a tremendous sensation. About a fortnight prior to the Derby, a fractious horse, "Muley Edris," bit his right arm to the bone, but Fred Archer, not to be deterred from fulfilling his engagements, had a special case (peculiarly constructed with a spring) made for the mutilated limb, and in that hampered state rode and came in first. After that, it is said he could have married the by no means unattractive widow of a certain Duke, who was most persistent in her attentions; but he had no ambition that way, his affections being already firmly rooted elsewhere. In the spring of 1883, he married Nellie Rose Dawson, whose bones now lie under a lofty red cross just in front of his.

Fortune, so proverbially fickle where some are concerned, now suddenly turned against him, for, in the autumn of the following year he lost his wife. He then gave up racing, and went to America, vainly hoping to find some relief for his aching

heart. Returning to England he again took to the turf, and went in for a course of excessive training, to reduce his weight. Never very robust, this rigorous treatment had a disastrous effect on his health, but he would keep on riding, and after losing race after race, involving a loss of both prestige and money, he was eventually laid low by a severe chill. Pneumonia followed, and then the final tragedy. While his nurse was out of the room, he called the attention of his sister (with whom he was left alone) to some object, and while she was looking at it, he shot himself. This terrible climax to his spell of bad luck occurred in his beautiful house at Newmarket, on November 8th, 1886. I can well recollect hearing, as a small child, the newsboys bawling out in the quiet roads of Clifton, Bristol, the sensational announcement of the tragedy. Now, as everyone knows, the spirits of suicides are not popularly supposed to rest in their graves, no matter how good a life they may have led in the flesh, and it was not long before a rumour was started in Newmarket to the effect that the ghost of Fred Archer had been seen, after dark, riding across the Heath, always a favourite spot of his, and along what is now designated the Hamilton Stud Road. Night after night the phenomenon occurred, then it ceased for a time, and then reoccurred; and ever since this first cessation, which lasted for several years, the haunting, it is said, has gone on at varying intervals up to the present time.

The ghost of man and horse were last seen, I am told, by a mother and daughter. They were walking one evening along the Hamilton Stud Road and, on coming to a rather lonely part of it, were surprised

to see a peculiar kind of mist forming just in front of them. They naturally stopped, and as they stood staring at it in amazement, it went on forming, until, in a very short time, the figure of a man on a light grey horse was fully materialized. What little light there was seemed to be concentrated on the face of the horseman, and the mother, who had known Fred Archer by sight, having lived in Newmarket all her life, recognized, with a start, the good-looking, clean-cut features of the unfortunate jockey. He was mounted, she said, on his favourite horse, a light grey racer, just as she had often seen him during his life on earth, and after advancing a few paces both he and his horse abruptly vanished.

Greatly shocked, for they knew they had encountered an apparition from another world, the two women hastened home, and the story of their adventure was soon the common talk of the town. Hoping to experience the haunting myself, I went to Newmarket, one day, and when I got there discovered that the town was very much divided in opinion as to the truth of the occurrence. Some declared it was all a make-up ; and some that the two women, whose names, by the way, are rightly withheld, were imaginative and really fancied they saw something ; but, on the other hand, many, perhaps the majority, were convinced that the Hamilton Stud Road was haunted and haunted in the manner described. Determined, as I have said, to visit the haunted spot, in order, if possible, to get in touch with the ghost, I set out early in the afternoon, stopping at the cemetery on my way. Its atmosphere was strangely restful. Viewed in the sunshine, indeed, it had an air of such peace and

serenity that I could hardly realize its association with a disturbed soul, and after gazing respectfully at poor Archer's grave I wandered on to the Heath and entered into conversation with an old man, whom I found seated on the ground beside a wheelbarrow.

"Have I ever heard anything about Fred Archer's ghost," he said, in answer to my interrogation. "Well, yes I have, often, when I was a young man, but I never actually saw it."

"You had an experience of some kind, though?" I observed.

"Yes," he replied, "I had. If you're interested, I don't mind telling you. I had been to Six Miles Bottom and was returning home along the road leading past the 'Green Man' and what is known about here as 'The Two Captains.' It was between one and two o'clock at night, or I should say in the morning. The moon was high overhead, no one was about, and all was so still you could catch the slightest sound. Well, I had passed the junction of the London and Cambridge roads, and had almost got to the cleft in the Devil's Ditch, where the main road runs through, when, all of a sudden, I saw the black shadow of a horse and rider on the white road alongside me. Wondering where the real man and horse could be, for I heard no sound, I looked all about me, but there was nothing to be seen. The shadows, however, were still there, and they moved along by my side until I got right up to the cleft; then they suddenly disappeared. The man, judging, of course, by his shadow, seemed to be fairly tall, and he was wearing a hat with a peak that might have been either what we used to call a deer-stalker, or a jockey's cap. I thought, myself,

that it was Fred Archer's ghost, which I had been told was sometimes to be seen on the Heath, but when I described it to an old friend of my father's, a man who had lived in these parts for close on eighty years, he said it was far more likely to have been the ghost of a highwayman, for highwaymen infested the Heath at one time, and used to rob and murder people, but Fred Archer, poor soul, had never done any harm to anybody but himself."

After saying good-bye to the old man, who had told me the story, I made my way back to the town, refreshed myself with tea, and then set out again, intending to get there this time in the direction of the Hamilton Stud Road. Once more, passing the cemetery, I turned off down a seemingly interminable straight road, and on reaching the end of it at last, I found myself in what I knew, from the description given me, must be the Hamilton Stud Road. I proceeded along it until I came to a slight hollow, in which nestled a cottage and a few farm buildings, and just beyond this landmark, a collection of trees, forming a kind of spinney. Feeling somewhat tired, after what was for me an unusual amount of walking, I flung myself down under the shadow of the trees and presently became engrossed in a little book on Cambridgeshire I had bought in the Charing Cross Road the night before. Not until the waning daylight rendered it impossible for me to read any longer did I realize that it was getting somewhat late. Feeling a bit stiff and cramped, I got up and was stretching myself, when suddenly I became conscious of a sensation of extreme eeriness, and this feeling speedily became so utterly unbearable that I hurried from the spot

in something like a panic. Some little distance on, I met a cyclist, and asked him if he could tell me whereabouts in the road Fred Archer's ghost had been seen. "Yes," he said, "I can," and he forthwith described the spot I had just quitted. I returned to it and remained there for some considerable time, but, as I did not undergo that eerie sensation again, I concluded that whatever had caused it must have gone. This was my one and only experience of anything of a ghostly nature in the Hamilton Stud Road.

Whether the sensation I underwent was due to Archer's ghost or not, I cannot say. Why his spirit should haunt the neighbourhood none of us are sufficiently acquainted with the laws and ways of the Unknown to say. We can only surmise. The tragedy of his ending may have something to do with it, but, on the other hand, he may be drawn to the spot simply by the affection he had for it in his lifetime, and which he even yet retains.

CHAPTER XXVI

STRANGE EXPERIENCES AT LECTURES AND SOME WEIRD PARTIES

Those who have attended my ghost parties tell me they will never forget them. I gave my first in a studio, kindly lent me for the occasion, in Clifford's Inn. Owing to severely limited space, for besides being small, the studio was somewhat full of artists' accessories, I had invited only about twenty people, and was utterly taken aback when more than double that number arrived. They managed to get in, but were so tightly wedged together that, after a while, the Black Hole of Calcutta, compared with that studio, must have seemed a dream of comfort.

We began with a little table-turning, and then Mr. Nathan Dean,[1] a member of the Magic Circle, gave a very clever exhibition of so-called spirit-writing on a slate. He explained afterwards that it was merely a trick, and not done through any spirit agency, but one fanatical spiritualist who was present refused to believe his explanation, declaring that she had never seen such a wonderful demonstration from the other world. Illustrations of the sort of faked spirits that are so often palmed off as real ones by professional mediums at séances followed, and were appreciated by the audience, among whom were several newspaper reporters. Two of them had brought their cameras and in their

[1] The late Art Editor at Messrs. Pearsons, Henrietta Street. He died about two years ago.

excitement took flashlight photos of each other instead of the ghost. Their disgust on discovering their error was not at all edifying, nor was their language! In the intervals between the appearances of the faked apparitions, which were very cleverly done, additional excitement was caused by a sudden downpour of split peas, believed by one or two of the people present to be a manipulation on the part of one of the "ghosts," until Miss Hester Stanhope,[1] who was one of the party, confessed that she threw them to imitate a hailstorm, as she understood hail and rain were very helpful in obtaining spirit phenomena.

The party, the first of its kind ever given in London, was very fully reported in the Press, and proved such a success that I resolved to give another in the near future.

Two years passed, however, before I was able to carry out my resolution. For this second occasion I secured a large studio in King's Road, Chelsea, and additional interest was given to the party by the fact that the studio had long been reported haunted by the phantom of a little old man in a snuff-coloured suit. I invited about fifty people, but, owing to a daily paper publishing a paragraph about the event a day or two before it occurred, to my horror, something like a hundred and fifty people turned up. This quite spoiled all chance of carrying out the full programme that had been prepared and, consequently, a very few of its items were performed.

One, however, proved a real thriller. Mr. William Marriott, the expert on magic of all kinds, whose

[1] Grand-daughter of the late Earl Stanhope. She died in Paris several years ago.

name is so well known in connection with spirit photography, converted a hair from the head of one of the ladies present into a real snake, that fell wriggling on the floor of the studio, amid screams of horror from my women guests. Although Mr. Marriott was surrounded with people, who were packed like sardines in a tin within a few feet of him, none apparently knew how the transformation was accomplished, and everyone appeared to be mystified. Much to my amusement, a Gloucester paper—the entertainment was enthusiastically reported by the Press—attributed this marvellous performance to me !

Several professional mediums who were present, determined not to be outdone by Mr. Marriott, gave an exhibition of psychometry and clairvoyance, which, however, proved very unconvincing and met with a very lukewarm reception.

After the lapse of another two years, I gave the third of these parties in a large flat, also both reputed to be haunted and borrowed for the occasion, near the Queen's Road, Bayswater. The idea I conceived at first was a Dante's Inferno party, no one being permitted to come who was not attired as some character represented in that work ; but as many of the people I particularly wanted to be present declared they could not get the correct costumes, I sanctioned any weird dress, and the result was that people in the neighbouring houses and sundry passers-by were electrified at seeing skeletons, ghosts, witches, Pans, devils, goblins and weird forms of all kinds pour into the house. One of the rooms presented a truly terrifying appearance, its walls being draped in black, on which were painted flames and demons, the effect of which was

enhanced by a lurid red light. The flat consisted of the ground floor and a basement, and in the basement was a very long and gloomy stone passage. Here all sorts of horrors had been prepared for those who were rash enough to accept my challenge to walk along it alone at midnight. The only illumination was an eerie blue light, and as they grouped their way along, they found themselves entangled in invisible nets, while skeleton hands clutched at them from cupboards and corners, and dreadful faces peered out at them from dark doorways.

One or two ladies fainted right away and had to be revived with brandy, of which and other "spirits" there was fortunately a good supply.

In one cellar they saw horrors of the Spanish Inquisition portrayed in true Grand Guignol style, in another a vivid picture of a Chinese opium den, and in a third all kinds of nightmarish figures. Much of the success of this part of the programme was due to Mr. William Marriott, his friend, Mr. William Beck, and Mr. Antony Blair, a clever young magician. The last named was, I think, responsible for the greatest thrill.

In the middle of a dance on the ground floor a lady in fancy costume rushed screaming into the ballroom pursued by a man, also in fancy costume, who forced her on to her knees and sliced her head off with a gleaming scimitar ! Of course it was all a trick, but it was so realistically performed that more than one of the audience screamed in no feigned terror.

The dancers presented a truly weird and picturesque appearance. Among them were Sir Simeon Stuart, Bart., an old Cliftonian, once Marshal of the City

of London and now a well-known film star; Miss Bertha Gordon Selfridge, who wore a wonderfully fascinating garment decorated with imitation snakes, and my cousin, Lady Griffin, whose sad and sudden death in Vienna two years ago came as a big shock to all her family.

One of the most striking costumes was that of Mrs. Gossip, of the "Daily Sketch," who came as The Ghost of Jaz. Miss Lilian Norris gave an exhibition of dancing, entitled "Lucifer's Daughter," arranged by Pavlova's partner, Mr. Laurent Novikoff, and accompanied by Mr. Vladimir Lawnitz.

Mr. Novikoff was present watching the performance, as also was Miss Norris's father, Herbert Norris, who has since designed the costumes of the Kings and Queens in the New Tussaud Exhibition in Baker Street.

Another striking solo dance, called "Smoke," was given by Miss Phyllis Calvert, daughter of Leonard Calvert, the actor. An amusing incident, which might, however, have proved fatal, occurred shortly before the party broke up. Quite unknown to me, one of the guests was subject to *delirium tremens*, and having imbibed very heavily during the evening he was suddenly seized with a violent attack of that malady. Snatching up a knife, he made a rush at one of the other guests, who fled for his life. The rest of the company thought, and doubtless to this day still think, it was part of the entertainment and shrieked with merriment. Fortunately, the drunkard was disarmed in time, otherwise the night's mock horrors would have terminated in real tragedy.

And this reference to tragedy reminds me of an incident that occurred during one of my talks on

" ghosts " at the old International Club in Regent Street.

After I had finished speaking, a lady got up and declared she had seen a skeleton standing behind me during the lecture, waving its arms to and fro in the air, as if keeping time to some slow and solemn music. She spoke so tragically and looked so agitated that the audience were visibly affected, and when a black cat, coming from apparently nowhere, suddenly leaped on to my shoulder, one or two of the company, believing it to be some spirit from the internal regions, screamed with terror. It turned out afterwards to be a quite harmless pussy, that during the lecture had been lying under the table on the platform from which I had been speaking.

On another occasion, when I was giving a " talk " in a hall I had hired for the occasion, my chairman did not turn up, and I was about to begin without one, when a slim youth with rather pronounced light blue eyes asked if he might take the chair. He said his name was Bernard Robert, and that he was used to public speaking. He proved to be most efficient, and several of the ladies present were greatly charmed with him. Some weeks later, he perpetrated a daring bank robbery under the name of D. S. Windle (i.e., damned swindle), and was sent to prison. His photograph appeared in various papers at the time, and I have often wondered if any of the ladies he so charmed saw and recognized it.

Just one more incident in connection with my work in public. I was doing some palmistry at a three days' fair at Kew in aid of a local War Charity. The festivities were kept up on the opening day till a very late hour, and just as I was joyfully preparing to come away, feeling somewhat " done up," for I

had really worked hard dealing with a continuous stream of eager, curious people, a tall, elderly gentleman came into my tent and insisted on my reading his lines. After I had finished, he said: "I am a bit of a palmist myself, and I once had a very curious experience, when reading hands at a bazaar in Birmingham. I was sitting alone in the room allotted to me, when a lady in black, whom I took to be about 75 years of age, entered and asked me to read her hand. It was a beautifully proportioned hand, the fingers long and tapering, and the nails of a perfect shape, but when I glanced at the life line I was puzzled, for it certainly seemed to indicate a very short life. She should, in fact, have died in her teens. As I was silent for some time, the lady asked me if I saw anything very bad in her lines, and was so persistent, that I eventually blurted out, 'Yes, I do. According to your life line, you should have died when you were about nineteen years of age.' 'So I did,' she replied gravely, and the next moment I found myself staring into space. She had inexplicably vanished. Odd, wasn't it?"

I was about to say, "Very odd," or something to that effect, when he cried out, with a very perceptible start, "Why there she is!" and, on looking round, I was much surprised to see a tall lady in black, with a very pale face and large, dark eyes, standing just behind me. I had no time to speculate as to how she had come in without my seeing her, for my male client had no sooner cried out, then he fell from his seat to the ground, either in a fit or a faint, which so alarmed me, that I rushed out of the tent, to summon assistance. When I returned, the man and woman had both disappeared.

I do not suggest that they were ghosts, indeed,

it is only too likely that they were simply clever tricksters ; but, as I was giving my services gratuitously in aid of a very worthy cause, their conduct has always struck me as just a bit shabby.

Another trick for which, however, the trickster could hardly be held responsible, was played upon me once in Hampshire. The owner of a house in Basingstoke let his house furnished to some people from London, who left before their tenancy was up, declaring that the place was haunted. Happening to be staying close to it at the time I obtained leave from the owner of the house to spend a night there, on condition that I maintained absolute secrecy.

I went there one evening in July, at about nine o'clock, by the old summer time. The sun was setting, and the house was flooded with subdued golden light.

I had subjected the ground floor to a minute search, in case of possible hoaxers, and was passing through one of the bedrooms on the first floor when I got a decided thrill. The dressing-table, which was draped all round in the old-fashioned style with a valance, suddenly began to glide across the floor. It came straight for me, and I was preparing to make a dash to the door, when a very ordinary looking hand suddenly shot out from under the valance, obviously intending to grip me by the ankle. Convinced now that I had to deal with a human being I gave the hand a kick, whereupon it was instantly withdrawn, and I bade whoever it was come out at once or I would fire my revolver. (As a matter of fact I hadn't one with me.) A few seconds passed and then a fair-haired youth, of about eighteen, crawled out from under the valance, looking very foolish and frightened. It transpired that he was the half-witted son of the caretaker, and had been

playing the rôle of ghost there for some time past, his object being to prevent people from taking the house, so that he and his mother could go on living there rent free.

With a brief account of an experience in a country house near Worthing, followed by a story told me at a reception only this year, my reminiscences, thus brought up-to-date, must close. The experience near Worthing : I was invited, a few years ago, to investigate a case of alleged hauntings in the garden of a house on the South Downs. An elderly gentleman and his niece lived there and kept a small menagerie, including a pet monkey that lived in a dog's kennel. I spent the night in various parts of the garden waiting for the ghost of a young man stated to walk about there between eleven and two o'clock. I did not see him ; but I did see a very curious thing, properly speaking a phenomenon. I was standing near a large swing that was said to be haunted, when it was suddenly set in motion. Backwards and forwards it swung in the most violent manner, the seat groaning and creaking all the time as if someone were sitting on it. As far as I could see, there was positively nothing physical to account for it. The night was very still, the leaves on the trees hardly stirred at all, and the branches, of course, were quite motionless. There was something so intensely eerie about the whole thing, for though I saw nothing I could feel something was there, that I had to move away from that spot, and for the rest of the night confine my attentions to another part of the garden. I had already come to the conclusion that the swing was closely associated with some very grim tragedy, and certain facts that I learned subsequently from someone living in

the neighbourhood only confirmed me in my belief that such was actually the case.

The story told me at a reception this year : First of all, a word or two about the reception. It was given by Mr. Whitley, then Speaker of the House of Commons, to past and present masters of Clifton College, his old school, and to old Cliftonians.

The crush was, I should think, almost a record, and naturally so, for a more novel, deeply interesting, and amusing form of entertainment could hardly be conceived. No other Speaker of the House has ever had the originality, the courage, or the kindness of heart to embark on such an undertaking, and every O.C. present at that supremely successful gathering will, I am sure, agree with me that, for this idea alone, Mr. Whitley should be deemed by us all a " Heaven-born genius."

While I was threading my way through the crowd, peering into every man's face to see, if perchance, he might be of my time, one portly old fellow, covered with decorations, thrust his face into mine and said, " Aren't you so-and-so ? "—mentioning a man who had been at the school years before me. I told him I was very sorry to disappoint him, whereupon he asked me my name, and ejaculating, when I told it him, " Ah ! you have written some books on ghosts, haven't you ? " at once proceeded to tell me the following incident :

" When I was here last year," he said, " I met D——." (This was an O.C. I had never heard of.) " He had been my contemporary at the school, and we chatted away for some hours. After he had moved on to talk to someone else, a lady came up to me and said, ' Excuse me, but do you believe in omens ? '

"'Why, yes,' I responded, 'sometimes. But why do you ask?'

"'For this reason,' she said. 'As I stood beside the man you were talking to just now, I smelt death. I am Welsh and the Welsh often have that gift, just as Highlanders have the gift of clairaudience and clairvoyance. Your friend won't be here next year, should the Speaker be kind enough to invite us again.'

"And he isn't here, at least not in the flesh," the O.C. continued. "That was the last time I saw him, for he died shortly afterwards. Of course his death might have been prophesied at random—but in any case it was queer, wasn't it?"

As a net result of these various experiences, I am left wondering. While my own experiences have convinced me that there are many phenomena which cannot, as yet, be satisfactorily explained by any known physical laws, and while, again, I think it very possible and, perhaps, probable that in some instances human personality, *in toto*, survives the grave, I am, nevertheless, not altogether satisfied or convinced that this is the case with every one. Indeed, some of the phenomena I have experienced suggest very strongly to my mind that in certain cases, where there is no apparent consciousness, and the actions are more or less automatic, it is a fragment only of ourselves that continues after physical dissolution. And, then, in regarding psychic phenomena as proof or evidence of a futurity beyond the grave for human beings, we must not overlook the possibility of impersonation by spirits or forces that are either antagonistic to the human species or merely mischievous.

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